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A  
DISSERTATION  
ON THE  
*Nature and Certainty*  
OF THE  
EVIDENCE of SENSE.

In ANSWER to the  
Cavils of MODERN UNBELIEVERS,  
CONCERNING THE  
MIGHTY SIGNS and WONDERS recorded  
in the HOLY SCRIPTURES.

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in the County of *Leicester*, and Chaplain to the Right  
Honourable the Earl of DERBY.

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Luke x. 23. *Blessed are the Eyes which see the things which  
ye see.*

Matt. iv. 9. — *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.*

1 John i. 1.—3. *That which was from the beginning, which  
we have heard, which we have seen with our Eyes, which  
we have looked upon, and our Hands have handled of the  
the Word of Life, —————*

*That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you.*

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A

# DISSERTATION

ON THE

NATURE and CERTAINTY of the  
EVIDENCE of SENSE, &c.

**I**T having pleased God by a *tedious* Confinement, a *lingring* Indisposition, and *great Weakness* of Body, to *disable* me from attending the proper *Offices* of my *Calling*; it is my *Duty*, and the *daily fervent Prayer* and *Endeavour* of my *Soul*, to *submit* to his *afflicting Hand*, with all becoming *Resignation* and *Patience*. And that, in these *deplorable Circumstances*, I may not be altogether a mere *Blank* in the *Creation*, of no *Use* to *myself*, or *Fellow-Creatures*, I have with *Pleasure* seized these *leisure Moments*, and made it the *Amusement* of many a *tiresome melancholy Hour*,

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when

when Intermiffion from *Pain*, and a Flow of Spirits fufficient to bear the *Fatigue* of intense Thinking, would give leave to recollect a *Series of fcattered Thoughts*, which have long exercifed my Mind, on a Subject of very great *Importance*, with refpect to the *Honour* of God, the *Caufe* of true Religion, and the *Welfare* of Mankind.

In a time of great *Profanenefs* and *unbounded Licentiousnefs* of Manners, the genuine *Fruit* and unavoidable *Confequence* of *Hardnefs* of Heart and *Unbelief*, amidft the many *daring* and *infolent* Attacks, which with *unparalleled Malice* and *Virulence*, have been made upon our *holy Religion*, to the great *Reproach* of our *Age*, and *Church*, and *Nation*, none have been more *barefaced* or *audacious* than thofe which have been levelled againft the *mighty Signs and Wonders* recorded in the *holy Scriptures*. *Miracles* are now become mere *Jefts*. — The *Testimony* of Man is *weak* and *fallible*. — *Uninterrupted Tradition* a Source of  
*Errors,*

*Errors*, little better than *Fiction* or *Romance*. — *Reports* of *Reports* of Things, handed down from *Generation* to *Generation*, thro' a *Succession* of *Ages*, sink daily in their *Credit*, and at length will have no more *Weight* than *idle Tales* or *wandering Dreams*: Or, which in a manner comprehends the whole, the *Evidence* of *Sense* is ridiculed and exploded as *fallacious* and *uncertain*, a *Foundation upon Sand*, too weak to support the mighty *Fabrick* of *revealed Religion*.

In order to obviate these *wicked Attempts*, and repel these *horrid Insults*, whilst many of *unquestionable Learning* and *Eminence*, are labouring with great *Zeal*, and (I trust by the Blessing of God upon their *pious Endeavours*) with *equal Success*, to stem the *Torrent* of *Infidelity*, to detect the *Fallacies*, and expose the *Sophistry* of *Gainsayers*; whilst these, out of their *Abundance*, are contributing their large *Doles* to the *Treasury*, in Support of true *Christian Faith* and

B 2                      Knowledge,



Knowledge, it will be *allowable*, I hope, at least *pardonable* in me, out of my Penury, to throw in my *Mite*, to promote the same *good* and *desirable End*. The Point I would confine myself to, is *the absolute Certainty of the Evidence of Sense*. I am not insensible of the *Arduousness* of the Undertaking; that the Stream of *Authority* is against me; and that I am encountering the *strongest Prejudices* and *Prepossessions* of Men; but the only Favour that I ask, is, that a *Verdict* in the Case may be *suspended*, until the Cause has had a *fair and equitable Hearing* at the Bar of *Reason* and of *Scripture*. Then let the *irresistable Force* of *Truth* prevail. And if the Adversary can be beaten out of his *strong Hold*, and the *Battery* on which he places his *utmost Trust* and *Confidence*, dismounted, this Kind of *Artillery*, for the future, will become *vain* and *useless*, and no longer an *Annoyance* to the *Sons of Peace*, and *diligent Searchers* after the *Ways of Truth*, and the *Comforts* and *Blessings* of *pure and undefiled Religion*.

Human

Human Knowledge is usually divided and branched out into three separate distinct Classes, respecting Truths,

1. Infallible,
2. Demonstrable,
3. Probable.

Under the first Class are ranged *self-evident Truths*, those which by their own *native Light* are so *plain*, that they cannot, by any *foreign Helps*, be illustrated or made *plainer*. They are *self*, that is, in their own *genuine Garb*, and *Shape*, and *Form*, *most evident*. Now, what is *most evident*, cannot be rendered *more so*. They are also called *first Principles*, because they admit of no *prior Proof*. What is *first* can have nothing *before* it. Of this Kind are the following Propositions. *The same Thing cannot be, and be at the same Time. — Light is essentially different from Darknefs.* To attempt to prove this, would be absurd and ridiculous. For if *Darknefs* could be *Light*, it would cease to be *Darknefs*, which is an *Exclusion* of all *Light*. The  
Ideas

Ideas are *inconsistent*, the Terms *repugnant* and *contradictory*. Knowledge of this Kind is also stiled *intuitive*, what *forces* its way into the Mind *irresistably*, and at *first Glance*, with a Light not inferior to the *Brightness* of the *Sun* at *Noon-day*. Truths thus discerned, are dignified with the high and pompous Title of *infallible*. But now in this Case, *Intuition* is a Metaphor taken from *Sight*, and seems only to imply, that *Truth*, thus presented to the *Mind*, appears with the *same* Degree of Evidence and Clearness, as Objects of *Sense* presented to the *Eye* : and if so, I should be glad to be informed, why the *Evidence* of both is not either *equally infallible*, or only *equally probable*. God is the Author of all Knowledge, *sensitive* or *intellectual*. There are *Streams* which *both* issue from the *same Fountain*. How then comes it to pass, that the *one* is *limpid* and *transparent*, and the other *confused* and *muddy*? But of this more hereafter. I would not be thought to *quibble* upon a *Word*,  
or



or lay too great a *Stress* on a *figurative Term*, desiring only to discover the *naked Truth* of Things.

Under the second Class of *demonstrable Truths*, are comprehended all those Things, whether *mathematical*, *physical*, or *moral*, which are capable of *strict undeniable Proof* or *Demonstration*. *Fair and legitimate Consequences*, deduced from *clear and indisputable Premisses*, *universally admitted*, without a *Possibility of Dissent*, by *all Mankind* are ranged under *this Head*, and Knowledge of this Kind is denominated not *infallible* (that, it seems, is too great an Honour, but only) *certain*; tho' where the Difference is betwixt *Infallibility* and *absolute Certainty*, may possibly require a very *nice Hand* to point out, and as *nice a Head* to distinguish.

The last Class of *probable Truths*, takes in those Things which are not capable of *strict Demonstration*, but where  
there

there is a greater *Appearance* of Truth on one Side than on the *contrary*. And the *Degrees* of Probability are *various* and *infinite*. When the Balance is in *æquilibrio*, the Mind is in *Suspence*, and can determine nothing; there can be no *Knowledge*, nothing but only *Doubt* and *Uncertainty*. If it *preponderates* on either Side, *Assent* of course necessarily follows, in Proportion to the *greater Weight* in the descending Scale. If a *Pound* proves *heavier* than an *Ounce*, much more so will *Myriads* of Pounds, if weighed in an *equal* Balance, *exceed* a *Scruple*. In the *same*, or *infinitely bigger Ratio*, may the *Degrees* of Probability *increase*, so as to be a very *sufficient justifiable* Ground of *Assent*, and *Motive* of *Action*, without leaving the *least Room*, or *Cause*, or *Shadow* of *Distrust* or *Doubt* upon the Mind; but yet still they will never be allowed to amount to *absolute Certainty*. No one disputes the Truth of the late dreadful Earthquake at *Lisbon*, but this no Man can *certainly know*, who has never been  
in

in *Portugal*, and viewed the Ruins of the City. He can only depend upon the Authority of *public News*, confirmed from *all Parts* of the World, and by *all Persons* who have since *visited* the Place, and whose Accounts have never been *disbelieved* or *contradicted* by any *different Reports*. Compliments of *Condolance* from foreign Princes, and *Supplies* sent for the Relief of the distressed Inhabitants, are *strong corroborative* Circumstances, in Support of the *Truth* of this terrible Calamity. But still all this *accumulated Evidence* does not reach the Point. *Human Testimony* at best is but *fallible*, and there *may be* a Confederacy of *Multitudes* of wicked and designing Men, to *impose* upon us. And where there is only a *bare Possibility* of this, be the Thing in itself ever so *incredible*, there our *Knowledge*, it seems, is not *certain*, but only, in the highest Degree, *probable*. A Man who gives a great Sum with his Son, put out Apprentice to a *Turkey Merchant*, can have no

C

Scruple



Scruple upon his Mind, whether there  
 be such a Place as *Constantinople*, it would  
 be *Infatuation* to part with his Money if  
 he had; but yet, if he has never tra-  
 velled, he can have nothing but *fallible*  
*human* Testimony to depend upon, and  
 he relies not upon *Certainty*, but only a  
 very great Degree of *Probability*. All  
 Facts recorded in *sacred* or *prophane* His-  
 tory are placed under *this Head*, and  
 ranked not amongst *demonstrable* and  
*certain*, but only *probable* Truths. And  
 the *Unbelievers* of *our Age* have taken  
 most *shameful* Advantage of these *Con-*  
*cessions*, first, by sinking these Facts down  
 to the very *lowest* Degree of *Probability*,  
 and then afterwards *discarding* them as  
 unworthy of the *least Regard* or *Credit*.  
 In Vindication therefore of the *Authority*  
 of the *Holy Scriptures*, I humbly sub-  
 mit what follows, concerning the *Nature*  
 of *human Testimony*, and the *Truth*, (I  
 had almost said the *demonstrable* Truth)  
 of the *Evidence* of *Sense*, to the *serious*  
 Consideration of the *candid* and *Christian*  
 Reader.

*Reader.* If this seem to be a *Paradox* too bold to be *advanced* or *defended*, let it at present be considered only as a *Problem*, till it appears what can be offered in *Defence* of it, in order to a *full* and *satisfactory Solution*. The Truth I would endeavour to establish, is,

The *clear* and *undeniable* (I must not yet presume to call it the *demonstrative* or *infallible*) *Certainty* of the *Information* we receive from the *Testimony* of our *Senses*.

And here I dare appeal to *constant* *invariable* Experience, and the *impartial* *united* Judgment of *all Mankind*. But let it be remembered, that I am not now considering *extraordinary Cases*, as in *Decay* or *Obstruction* of *Sight*, or *total Blindness*, where the *Sense* is *depraved* or *vitiated*, or *quite lost*; or of a *Delirium* or *Madness*, where there is a *Deprivation* of *Sense*; and common Language will justify us in saying that a Man is

*bereft* or out of his *Senses*, (it being impossible that they should be *perfect Guides*, when they *cease* to be *Senses*, and are no *Guides* at all;) I am not now considering *extraordinary Cases*, but only the *regular* and *ordinary* and *natural* Course of Things. And in these Circumstances I dare venture to affirm, that our *Senses* neither *do*, nor *can* deceive us. We don't mistake *Fire* for *Water*, nor throw ourselves down from a *Tower* or *Precipice*, imagining we are *secure* and *safe* upon a *Plain*. Let every *Sense* be exerted in its own *Province*, the *Organ* *fitly* disposed, and the *Object* *accurately* examined, and we know, in fact, that the *Testimony* of our *Senses* will ever be found *invariable* and *true*. We can believe our *Eyes*, not only so far as to distinguish *different* *Objects* from one another, but even to the discerning of different *Features* or *Lineaments* in the *Faces*, or *different Letters* or *Strokes* in the *Hand Writing* of Men. And this we can do with so much *Certainty*, as to be qualified to  
give



give *Oath* in these Cases, and affect them in their *Lives* and *Properties*, upon the *Strength* of this *Evidence*. No Court refuses *such Witnesses*, which is a plain Proof, that in the Opinion of all Mankind, our *Senses* are *competent Judges* of what lies before us, or the *real Truth* of Things ; it being a most *shameful* and *iniquitous* Practice to condemn any to *suffer* or *die*, if there is no sure *Principle* of Action, or *solid Foundation* to build upon. To make this evident beyond Exception, let it be considered,

I. That we are the *Workmanship* of God, a Being of *unerring Wisdom* and *infinite* in *Goodness* and *Power*. Now can any Thing *bungling* and *unfinished* come out of the Hands of *such an Artist*? This surely is *absurd* and *impossible*. Every good and every perfect Gift, we are informed, by an inspired Apostle (*Jam. i. 17.*) is from above. If then we can prove our *Beings* and *Faculties* to be of *divine Extraction*, this at the same Time will

will prove their State of *Excellency* and *Perfection*. When God reviewed all the Creatures which his Hand had made, we read (*Gen. i.*) that he surveyed them with infinite Delight and Complacency; *and behold*, in the Judgment of him who could not *err* or be *deceived*, they were without *Flaw* or *Defect*, or *Blemish*, both in *Part* and the *Whole*, compleatly and exquisitely good. Not only the *Realms* of *Light* are adorned with all imaginable *Excellency* and *Splendour*, but these *lower Regions* of *Clouds* and *Darkness*, are not left destitute of their *Proportion* of *Beauty* and *Perfection*; all inimitably contrived and adjusted to answer the *various*, and *wise*, and *gracious* Ends of Providence, and to render the *universal System of Nature* a compleat Structure of *unparalleled Symmetry* and *Order*. If we consider the *Heavens*, the *Work of God's Hand*, the *Moon* and the *Stars* which he has ordained, the *Firmament* declareth the *Handy-work* of no less than a *divine Architect*, and the *Canopy* which

which hangs over our Heads *proclaims his Glory*. If from the *celestial Luminaries* (after a due Consideration of their *Magnitude, Revolutions, Station, Distance, Influence, and various Uses*) we descend to take a Survey of this *lower World*, even those Things which to heedless inconsiderate Mortals may seem *Botches and Deformities* in the *Works of God*, are not without their *peculiar Use and Excellence*; and *Clouds and Darkeness, and Meteors and Winds, and Storms and Tempests, and Frost and Snow, and Hail, and Rain, and Vapours*, are all good, in their *Kind and Season*, and with a Voice intelligible to every *rational Being*, conspire to celebrate their *Maker's Power and Greatness*, and *praise the Name of the Lord*. The several *Inhabitants of Earth, and Air, and Waters*, have all received most plentiful *Draughts of the divine Favour and Goodness*; nor has God been *niggardly* in his *Bounty*, to what are usually esteemed the very *meanest* of his *Creatures*. Not so much



as *Reptiles*, or *Flies*, or *Insects*, are overlooked and forgotten ; but, as the *Earth* is full of his Riches, so is the great and wide *Sea* also ; and his *Power* and *Goodness* no less conspicuous and adorable in the Construction of *small, and creeping Things* innumerable, than that of the greatest, and most unwieldy, and enormous *Beasts*. The most diminutive, and even (without the Help of Microscopes) imperceptible *Animalcules*, are framed with incomprehensible Skill, and cloathed with inexpressible Beauty ; and so visibly is the Care of an universal Providence, that I can hardly be persuaded, that any one Species of Beings is extinct, to which God gave Birth at the Creation. O Lord, how manifold are thy Works ! in Wisdom hast thou made them all, (Ps. civ. 24.) Now if all Things are formed with that consummate Skill and Workmanship, that no Degree of Perfection is wanting, of which their respective Natures are capable ; is it conceivable that *Man*, created after the divine Image, and the peculiar Object of his Love and Favour, should  
be

be the only *Piece* of *Botch-work* and *Deformity* amongst all the *visible* Works of God? Can a God who *loves* us, have bestowed Faculties upon us to our *Hurt*? or have given us *Senses* to *misguide* and lead us to Error or inevitable Destruction? This I cannot say without *reproaching my Maker*; and therefore conclude, that the *Means* of Knowledge, vouchsafed for my *Good*, are adequate to the *End intended, safe and perfect, and right and true.*

All this will readily be granted, in respect to Man in his *primitive* State of *Innocence* and *Purity*; it being manifest that he could not come *imperfect* out of the *Hands* of his *Creator*. But we shall be told, that the *Face* of Things is *now* intirely *changed*, that the *Earth* we inhabit is re-transformed into a second *Chaos*, a *horrid* Place of *Sterility, Darknes* and *Confusion*, bearing no nearer a Resemblance to *itself*, in its *original* State, than the *Wilds* and *Wastes* of *Africa* to the

*Garden of Eden* : ——— and that, by the Entrance of Sin into the World, Man is an inconceivable Sufferer both in *Mind* and *Body*; the *one* being rendered *mortal*, and the *other* *distempered* and overclouded by irregular Appetites, and *unnatural Affections*, the *Faculties* of his Soul *depraved* and *corrupted*, his *Understanding* darkened, his *Will* perverted, and his *Reason* and *Judgment* tainted and blinded by the *judicial Sentence* of Heaven, passed upon him for his *fatal Transgression*. These and many more such *tragical Complaints* and *Outcries*, heightened and exaggerated by polemical Writers, in all the *moving pathetick Strains* of *Grief* and *Eloquence*, are frequent in the *Mouths* of many *serious Christians*, and abound in both *antient* and *modern Books* of *Divinity*. But it is much easier for *learned* and *ingenious Men* to frame or *adopt Systems*, and afterwards defend them with *specious* and *plausible Arguments*, than to *reconcile* them with the *Word of God*, the *true Constitution* of Things, or even  
the



the *Reason* and *common Sense* of Mankind. I defy the *warmest Advocates* for *universal Depravity* and *Corruption*, to produce any *clear, express, uncontroverted* Texts of Scripture, where God is said to have *sunk* us into such *extreme Degeneracy* and *Misery*, and *Blindness*, that we are no longer *capable* of *discerning* betwixt *Truth* and *Error*: I defy them to prove that our *primary Sensations* of Things, *impressed* upon the Mind by a *divine Stamp*, are *adulterate* and *erroneous*: I defy them to shew, that the *Notices* of our Senses, the *Avenues* to Truth and Knowledge, are *false* and *unfaithful*; or that God deals with us as *Stocks* and *Stones*, utterly *devoid* of Understanding, and totally disabled from distinguishing *Light* from *Darkness*, *Bitter* from *Sweet*, and *Good* from *Evil*. This is so far from being the Case, that a *heavy Woe* is *denounced* against those, who *sin* against the *Light* of their *own Breasts*, and regard not the *clear* and *essential Difference*, in the *Nature* of Things. They who forsake the

*living God and cleave unto Idols, are not absolved but reproached for this their (not judicial, but) voluntary Blindness, and highly criminal Insensibility; infomuch that they are declared to be altogether without Excuse [Rom. i. 19, 20.] In the darkeſt Ages, and to the moſt ignorant and barbarous Nations, God hath not left himſelf without Witneſs, in that he doth good, and giveth them (what no one elſe can) Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling their Hearts with Food and Gladneſs. Theſe are Proofs that he has not forgotten to be gracious, nor ſhut up his loving Kindneſs in everlaſting Diſpleaſure, but that he has ſtill the Bowels of a tender, and compaſſionate, and moſt indulgent Father, ever ready to ſtretch forth the Arms of his Mercy to his diſobedient but returning Children. All the Judgments denounced in Scripture againſt impious Cities and Nations, are not conſidered or repreſented as the Continuance or Execution of an original Curſe, but as the juſt Punishment of the then prevailing Iniquity*

*Iniquity and Abominations* of these wicked Places, which kindled the Wrath of Heaven against them. In short, *corrupt and wicked* as the World is, God has still given us *Light* sufficient for all the Purposes of *Life and Godliness*; and if we chuse to *walk in Darknes*, this is not, because we have *no Eyes*, or *faithful Guides* to lead and direct us in the *Paths of Truth*, but because we are *perverse and disobedient*, and *foolish*, and *love Darknes* rather than *Light*, for the Reason assigned by our blessed Lord, because our *Deeds are Evil* (*John* iii. 19.) Let no one then presume to cast his *Guilt* upon God, who no more *deceiveth* than *tempteth* any Man by *false Lights*, and *guileful Representations*; but let him piously acknowledge, in due *Reverence* of his *Creator's Name*, that he is *faithful* in all his *Notices*, *righteous* in all his *Ways*, and *just* in all his *Judgments*.

I hope I may now venture to reassume the Position I at first laid down, that the *Reports* of our Senses are *evidently true*,  
and



and that they are not *Instruments of Error and Deceit*.

But what? will you then presume (so it may be objected) to make Man a *poor, weak, and oftentimes deluded*, at length an *omniscient and infallible* Creature? *God forbid*. I am too sensible of the *Weakness and Insufficiency* of human Nature. But I conceive it highly for the *Honour* of God, to vindicate his *Wisdom, and Goodness, and Justice*, from Insinuations that would suggest that he himself has a Hand in *seducing and misguiding* us into the *Snares of Error*. The *Power* even of *Omnipotence* itself, is *limited by*, or does *not extend to* the doing of *Impossibilities*, whether of a *moral or natural* Kind. It is no *Absurdity* to affirm, that it is not in the *Power* of a *faithful and righteous* Being to deal *unfaithfully or unrighteously* with his Creatures. A God of *Truth* cannot *lye or deceive*. *Unerring Wisdom* cannot *mistake*, pursue *wrong Measures*, or give *foolish and pernicious Counsels*,

Counsels. No: Whatever is inconsistent with the divine Attributes, it is *impossible* for the *Almighty* himself to do. Consequently, if to inflict such a *Punishment* upon *Man* as would *defeat* his own *gracious* Intentions, and instead of *reforming* a Sinner, and making him *better*, would only further *disable* him from *doing Good*, and make him *worse*, is not to be reconciled with the *moral Perfections* of God. This is even a *Demonstration*, that the *Notices* of Heaven are not so *unfavourable* and *pernicious*, that the *Faculties* of our *Minds* are not *debased*, to sink us *deeper* into *Guilt*, and make us *more wicked*, and *more miserable*, nor our *Senses* bestowed upon us as *Instruments* of *Error* to *plague* and *torment*, but as the *friendly Directors* to the *Ways of Truth*, which we may with *Comfort* and entire *Trust* and *Assurance* most *safely* depend upon. It is our great Master's own Aphorism (*Mat. xv. 14.*) *If the Blind lead the Blind, both shall fall into the Ditch.* Suppose our *Senses* to be  
these

these *helpless* and *blind* Guides, and there is no other Prospect before us but *Error*, and the *Pit*, and *Destruction*. Our very *Guides* are *useless*, our *Lights* become *Darkness*, *Curses* rather than *Blessings*, and *unworthy* of a Place among the *good* and *perfect* Gifts of God.

But I would willingly search this Subject to the very *Bottom*, and view it in every *possible* Point of *Light*, and therefore for the present, let it be *supposed*, not *granted*, that our Senses *can*, or *do* deceive us: And what will be the *necessary*, *unavoidable* Consequence of this *Supposition*? Why then,

1<sup>st</sup>. Here is a manifest *Defect* (and this, as I intimated before, must imply either *Want* of *Skill*, or *Power*, or *Goodness*) in the *Workmanship* of God. We are fixt in a State of *unavoidable Error*, and it is the *Will* of *Heaven*, that we spend all our Days here upon Earth, in *Deceit* and *believing a Lye*. There is no Remedy. We can have no Knowledge of *exterior Objects*, but from the *Informa-  
tion*



tion of our Senses, and if that is *fallacious* and *unfaithful*, God himself is the *Author* of all our *Darkness* and *Confusion*. Now this surely borders upon *Blasphemy*.

2dly. The *Justice* and *Equity* of all *penal Laws* is taken away, it being manifestly a most *unrighteous* Thing to *punish* Men without *perfect Knowledge* of their Guilt. And I will add one other Consequence, very unfavourable to the Zealots of a certain Church, that they ought not to presume to offer themselves as *Witnesses* in any Court of Judicature. Their *Oaths* ought *not* to be taken. They can only rely upon the *Testimony* of their *Senses*, and *these*, according to their *own Principles*, may deceive them. And if Mens *Oaths* are not to be taken, how can we believe them on their *bare Words*? How can we expect *Infallibility* from these People? And what becomes of their favourite Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, deduced from these Words, *This is my Body*, (Mat. xxvi. 26.) since if

the *Evidences* of *Sense* may be called into question, it cannot appear either by *Scripture* or *Tradition* that any such Words were ever *writ* or *spoken*.

3dly. We can have no *Assurance* of the *Truth* of the *Christian Religion*. This was confirmed by *Miracles*, which are only an Appeal to the *Senses* of Mankind ; and if *these* are not capable of discerning the *Truth* of Things, what we esteem *real* *Miracles* might be only the Work of *Error* and *Delusion*. In vain did our Lord call upon his Disciples, (*Luke* xxiv. 39.) *Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I myself, for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have*. If a careful and accurate Examination of the *Reality* of his Body by their *Senses*, was not a *solid* and *rational* Foundation of Belief, in vain did he reproach the *Jews* for their *Incredulity*, and tell them *if he had not done amongst them the Things which never Man did, they had not had Sin*, (*John* xv. 24.) For where is the Fault of *rejecting* *Miracles*, if they  
are

are destitute of *clear* and *undeniable* proof? And how can it, *with Truth*, be said, that *we have no Cloak for our Sin*, if we are not *capable* of judging, whether these *mighty Works* are of *God*? But the Voice of *Truth* itself has decided this Point for us. When Christ upbraided the Cities, (*Luke x. 13.*) which disregarded his Doctrine, and Miracles, and *repented not*, he declared *that if the mighty Works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which had been done in them, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in Sackcloth and Ashes.* But now how could this be, if the *Evidence* of these Works was not *strong and clear, and irresistible*? Equally *decisive* is his *Reproof* and *Condemnation* of the *Jews*, where he makes it the greatest Aggravation possible of their Guilt, that they would not *believe* even their *very Senses*; but *having Eyes they saw not, Ears they heard not, and Hearts that would not understand.* So *unreasonable* and *dangerous* and *impious* it is to deny the *Truth* of the Information of our



*Senses.* I might here rest the Cause, and dismiss this Subject, if a due Regard was not to be paid to a great *Variety* of Objections. But it is Time to conclude this Chapter.

## C H A P.

## C H A P. II.

*Objections to the Certainty of the Evidence of Sense, considered and answered.*

IN answer to what has been advanced in the foregoing Chapter, it may be replied, “ But to what Purpose are *vain and empty Speculations*, which may amuse in *Theory*, but are contradicted by *Facts*, and daily Experience? Is it not *notorious and universally acknowledged*, that we are *weak and fallible Creatures*, and that our *Senses actually do* deceive us every Hour of our Lives? The Celestial Luminaries are *immense Bodies of Light*, and yet *seemingly how small and insignificant* in the Sight of our Eyes? By the Help of Glasses we descry *innumerable Stars* in the Firmament, of which our *natural Sight* gives us not the least *Intimation or Notice*. Walks adorned with parallel Rows of Trees, planted in the  
 most

most *exact* and *uniform Order*, and at *equal Distances* from each other, will appear at the further End *straitned* and contracted, and, if continued far enough, the Trees on each Side will still seem *gradually* to *approach* nearer and nearer to each other, 'till at length they *coincide* and *meet* in a *Point*. Now what are these but *notorious* Instances of *Deception*? How *frequent* are the *Complaints* of Men, that their *Eyes* and *Ears* have *failed* them, and that not only the *Works* of *Nature* and *Art* surpass their *Understanding*, but the common *Sleights* and *Tricks* of *Cheats* and *Jugglers* too easily *pass* upon them? If we step into the Fields, we shall find that the very Rocks and Groves, as if they had *Ears* and *Tongues*, can repeat *Sounds*, and *Words*, and *Voices*, nay even the most *ravishing* *Strains* of musical Instruments, without the least Variation of *Key*, or *Harmony*, or *Tone*, or *Accent*, to a most *amazing* and *inimitable* Degree of Truth and Exactness. Now what is all this but a *visionary* *fairy* Scene of *Mockery* and *Delusion*? To what most surprising



prizing Height of Perfection, has the admirable Art of *Painting* been carried ? The very Birds have been tempted down to taste of *forbidden Fruit*, the Product of the Pencil ; and a *consummate Master* of the Art, so far *himself* deceived, as to stretch forth his Hand to draw a *painted Curtain*. And how then can it be expected that one of *meaner Taste* and *inferior Judgment* should be able to withstand the *Magick* of such *powerful Illusions* ?”

These Observations may in the *main*, and in *great Measure*, be allowed to be *true* ; and yet the *Certainty* of the *Evidence* of *Sense*, will be no way affected by the *Concession*. That the *Sun*, and *Moon*, and *Stars* don't appear to our *naked Sight* in their real *Magnitude*, is no Proof of the *Deceivableness*, but rather of the *Infallibility* of our Senses. We find by *repeated, uniform, invariable Experience*, that (to speak in the Language of Philosophers) the *Angle of Vision* *increases* or *decreases*, in proportion to the *Nearness* or *Distance* of the Thing that is viewed ;

viewed ; or in more plain and intelligible Terms, that every Object *enlarges* itself upon our nearer *Approach* towards it, and grows *less* in proportion to the *Distance* we *retire* from it. Judge of the *Heavenly Bodies* by this most *perfect* and *infallible* Rule, and make *due* Allowance for the almost *immeasurable* Space interposed betwixt us and them, and they appear just as Bodies of their Dimensions *necessarily must*, and *ought* to do ; and if they appeared *otherwise*, then indeed an Exception might be made to the *Truth* of the *Evidence* of our *Senses*. And thus again, that *Telescopes* discover to us *Multitudes* of *Stars* in the Firmament, when the *naked Eye* tells us there are *none*, or at least that it *perceives not* any, is no Proof of the *Fallibility*, but rather of the *Truth* of our *Senses*. For if all Objects *decrease* in proportion to the *Distance* they are removed from us, remove them far enough, and there must at last be a certain Point where they will be diminished to such a Degree as to become *imperceptible*, and *necessarily escape* our Sight.

And





Fig. 1.

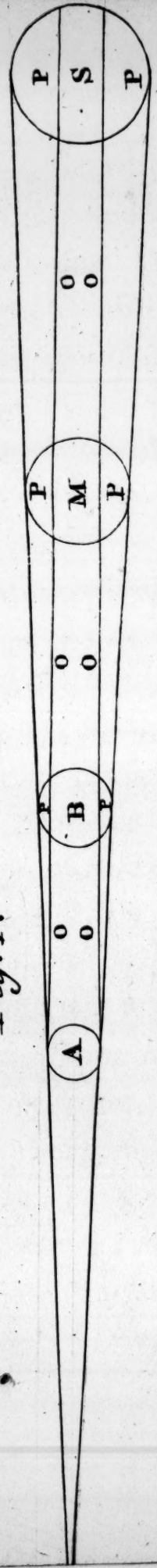


Fig. 2.



And in this Case the Eye informs us, not that there are *no Objects* beyond this Point, but that it's Faculty of seeing extends no further; and so far its *Information* is *right* and *true*, according to the *settled* and *invariable* Order of Things. It hence follows that two Bodies greatly different in Size, by reason of the *Inequality* of their Distances may appear to our Sight exactly of the *same Proportion* and yet the *Report* of our Eyes concerning each be *true* and *faithful*. The annexed Scheme will illustrate and fully explain my Meaning.

Let S. (Fig. 1.) represent the Sun, M. the Moon, and *e* the Eye of the Spectator standing upon the Earth. The Sun is known to be *abundantly larger*, and the Moon *considerably less* than our Globe. And yet in *this Position*, it is evident, that the Body of the Sun will be covered by the *Interposition* of the Moon, and its whole Orb *totally eclipsed*; consequently the *Diameters* of each, beheld at *e* will appear perfectly *equal*. I don't

F

speak

speak with *Philosophical Exactness*, for  
 then the Eclipse would be over,  
 would cease, I mean to be *total*, al-  
 most in a Moment; and the very next  
 Instant *after* the last *Disk* of the Sun's  
 Orb was *darkened*, the Rays of Light  
 would *emerge* on the opposite Side. But  
 the Difference is too inconsiderable to be  
 worthy of Notice. For the same Rea-  
 son, if two other unequal Bodies, A and  
 B of the *Size*, and in the *Situation*,  
 represented in the *Scheme*, be placed be-  
 twixt the Moon and the Earth, A will  
 intercept the Sight of B, as the Moon  
 does that of the Sun, and all these Bodies  
 will *appear* to the Eye of *equal Dimen-*  
*sions*. This Reason and true Philosophy  
 informs us must *necessarily* be the Case,  
 and our Sense of *Sight* confirms the  
*Truth* of the Observation. The real Dif-  
 ference betwixt the Magnitudes of these  
 Bodies, may be seen by the parallel Lines  
 o o o equal to the *Diameter* of A and  
 o o o exceed as the *Segments* of P P P But  
 P P P.  
 now, does it not hence follow, that if  
 four



four Bodies, confessedly so *very unequal*, appear *equal* in our Sight, that therefore the *Sight* is *imperfect*, and our *Eyes* deceive us? No: by no Means. This is not the *true State of the Case*. It is not the *Province of Sight* to *determine* the *real*, but only to *represent truly* the *apparent* Magnitude of Objects; to present before the Mind a *perfect Image* or *Picture* of what is seen *exactly* in the very *Light* and *Shape*, it appears at *such a Distance*, and in *such a Situation*. Now if it is demonstrable, by the *unerring Rules of Opticks*, that Bodies of *unequal Bulk*, must at certain Places and Distances appear of *equal Size*, and the Eye gives us the very *same Information*, that they *actually do so*, this is an *indisputable Proof* that its *Testimony* is *faithful*, and conformable to the *settled Laws* and *Order of Nature*.

Of a similar Kind is the Instance I mentioned of Trees planted in *even Rows*, and at *equal Distances* from each other

Let the Lines A B and C D represent these Rows in their *true* and *regular* Order, since all Objects of Sight *decrease* according to the Distance they are removed from us, it is very manifest that the *remotest* Trees will not only seem *less* than those *near at hand*, but that the *Breadth* of the Walk in the intermediate Space betwixt these Trees, though *equally* distant in all Places, will seem at the farthest End *contracted* or *diminished* in the same Proportion. These Trees, therefore, viewed from the Station at O, will appear not in the *parallel Lines* A B and C D the *true Place* of their *Situation*, but in the Lines E I, and G H continuing in a gradual Progression to approach nearer to each other, till at last they *close* and *unite* in the Point R. To remedy this Inconvenience, Gardeners are obliged to *widen* their Walks as they continue the *Length* of them, without which it would be impossible to preserve their *Uniformity*. This is the constant invariable Order of Nature,

Nature, with which the *Evidence* of *Sight*, is so far from *clashing* and *interfering*, that it *confirms* it to the utmost *Punctuality* and *Exactness*. In this Case then, it is manifest, here is no *Deception of Sight*, but the *Images* of things are *pictured* and set before us, in the very *Light*, and *Shape*, and *Order*, in which they *ought* to appear.

I shall only mention one Case more, but that so *extraordinary*, that it may seem to have the Air, not so much of a *Paradox*, as of a *glaring Absurdity*, or *palpable Contradiction*. Two Men view the *same Object*, at the *same Time*, and *Place*, and *Distance*, and it appears to *one* *four times* as large as to the *other*. This will always be the Case, if *one* of them is *short-sighted*. Now *little* and *great* are quite *opposite Ideas*, and cannot in the *same Respect* be applied to the *same thing*. Is it not then certain, that *one* of the Persons at *least* is *mistaken*, and the *Sight* of his Eyes imposes upon him? The Answer is plain and obvious, and not more



more *strange* than *true*, No: They are neither of them *mistaken*, their Eyes do their Office *faithfully*, and make a *true* Representation of the Object to *each*.

The Use of the *Eye*, like that of *Glasses*, is to *collect* the *Rays of Light*, and *exhibit* such an *Image* of the Thing seen, as its particular *Shape*, and *Form*, and *Structure* requires. A *convex* Glass *enlarges*, a *concave* *diminishes*, whatever is view'd thro' it. If then the *Eye* of one that is *short-sighted*, is of the *former* make, the Object must *necessarily* appear *larger* to him, than to one whose *Eye* is more flat, and *depress'd*. But then both are so far from being *deceived*, that each sees the Object in the very *Form* and *Shape*, in which view'd by such *Eyes*, or call them, if you please, *Instruments*, or *Glasses*, it must *always* necessarily *appear* in. This is so well known, that a *skilful Instrument-maker* knows by the *bare Sight* of the *Eye* of what *Form* the *Glass* must be to suit the *particular Case* of the Person who  
wants

wants it. The *Rays of Light*, thro' whatever *Medium* they pass, whether of *Air*, or *Water*, or *Glass*, or any other *transparent Substance*, are *always refracted* by *unchangeable Laws*, in the same *invariable Manner* and *Direction*, from which they *never can* depart, or *without a Change of Medium, or a Miracle*, be *diverted*. Now if the Eye performs its Office by such *inflexible, unerring Rules*, is not this even a *Demonstration* that it is a *sure and perfect Guide*, and its *Information* incontestibly *true* and *infallible*? I desire very *particular* Notice may be taken of this *Observation*, as I shall have Occasion to apply it hereafter.

As to the Case of *Ecchos*, this may well *surprize* and *delight*, not only the *unexperienced*, but the most *oscitant* and *incurious* Observer. How could it ever enter into the Heart of Man to conceive, that *Rocks*, or *Caves*, or *Woods*, or *Houses*, or *Walls*, should become vo-  
cal,

cal, and repeat *Sounds* and *Words* in all *Languages*, *articulately* and *distinctly*, and in the *same Voice* and *Accent* with which they were *spoken*? But if any *Man* will from hence fetch an *Argument*, to prove the *Deception* of our *Senses*, he will only expose his own *Ignorance* and *Weakness*. Let him attend the *Schools of Philosophy*, or the *Lectures* of the *inquisitive Searchers* after *Truth*, and he will soon be informed, from the *Nature* and *Cause* of *Sounds*, the *Manner* of their *Propagation*, and the *Quality* of the *Medium*, thro' which they pass, that all this *amazing* and *inimitable Mimickry* of *Words* or *Voice*, is not a mere *Lusus Naturæ*, the *giddy Sportings*, or *Frolick*, or *Gaity*, or *Archness*, or *Waggery* of *Nature*, to gull and *delude* poor *Mortals*, but the *steady uniform* Effect of *natural Causes*, the *certain* Consequence of a *proper Distance*, and a *peculiar Situation* of *Persons* and *Places*; and that all the *various undulating Motions* and *Tremors* of distant *Reports*



*Reports and Noises, till they sink away, and die in Silence, are reducible to stated Rules and Laws, and easy to be accounted for upon the Principles of true Philosophy.*

If any thing can challenge a Power of *imposing upon our Senses*, the wonderful Art of *Painting* may seem to have the *Preeminence*, and a right to put in the *first and fairest Claim*. Not only *Substance*, and *Life*, and *Symmetry* and *Beauty*, are wrought into a *coarse Piece of dead Canvass*, but *plain and smooth Bodies*, are *emboss'd*, or *hollowed*, *Niches* and *Arches* sunk into *even Surfaces* of *Stones* and *Walls*, and bold *Statues* erected in the midst of them, to the *Delight and Admiration* of every *Beholder*. In the *Hall of Greenwich Hospital*, Pillars (if I mistake not) of the *Corinthian Order* are most curiously *indented* or *fluted*, to a *Degree of Perfection*, I had almost said, to a *Degree of Deception*, scarcely to be credited.

Near the Cieling a Piece of Ordnance projects out so far into the Room, with its *Bore* so *open* and *natural*, that you imagine you can look *down* a *considerable Depth* into it. And particularly an *Anchor* of a Ship hangs so far out from the Wall, that you seem to see the *Shadow* of it upon the Wall, at a *surprizing Distance* behind it. But still, even here, without it be your own Fault, you need not be *deceived* by any *Imposition* upon your *Senses*. All this is the *necessary Consequence* of a *due Intermixture of Colours*, and *Light*, and *Shade*, producing by the *unerring Rules* of *Art*, founded in *Nature*, such an *Effect*, at such a *Distance*, and in such a *Situation*. The most perfect Artist *finishes* his *Piece*, not by *arbitrary* and *random Strokes* of *Fancy*, but by attending *diligently* to *Nature's Laws*, and observing *inviolably* her *infallible Instructions*. And if you would *guard* against the *Snares* of so *pleasing a Deception*, you need only change your *Place* and *Posture*,

ture, approach nearer, or step closer to the Object, and a single *Touch* of the *Hand* discovers the *Fallacy*, the *Delusion* vanishes, and all the exquisite *Workmanship* is nothing more than *artificial Colourings* spread upon a *plain* and *even Surface*. So that if you mistake a *Shadow* for a *Substance*, it is not the *Eye* that *deceives* you, but your own *weak Judgment*, and want of *Care* and due *Attention*.

I know of no *Objections* to the *Truth* of the *Evidence* of our *Senses*, of greater *Weight* and *Strength* than these, which, I hope, I have *satisfactorily* answer'd.



## C H A P. III.

*Objections to the Certainty of the Evidence of Sense, taken from Scripture, examined and refuted.*

OUR Task is not *half* finished, in replying to the *common* Instances of Deception, *pretended* to be discovered in the Contemplation of the *outward Works* of God, which daily lie before us; but his *sacred* and *infallible Word* shall be *mispleaded*, and the Authority of Scripture, our *surest Guide*, and *only perfect Rule of Faith*, produced and urged, to prove the *Fallibility* or great *Uncertainty* of the *Evidence* of our *Senses*. Thus Satan himself was *transformed into an Angel of Light*; the *Father of Lyes*, appealed to the *Oracles of Truth*, and the *pure Word of God* flowed from his *accursed* and *unhallowed Mouth*, when he attacked our Blessed Saviour with a *fair*  
but

but *insidious* Quotation ; and he had the Assurance to tell him to his Face, *it is written*. And thus his *Agents*, the *Emis-saries of Darkness*, are extremely expert in handling the same Weapon, and super-inducing Clouds, and *Blackness*, and the *thickest Veil*, and *Shades of Night*, into that very Place, where God has said, *Let there be Light, and there was Light*. How often are we told, and stunned, and struck deaf with the Repetition, that the Scriptures afford pregnant Proof not barely of the *Fallibility*, but of the *actual Deception* of our *Senses*? How boldly and confidently is it demanded, Did not *Moses* see a *Bush burning with Fire* for a considerable Space of Time, and yet all the while remain *unconsumed* and *unhurt*? This could not be *true elementary Fire*, which has *always* a very *different Effect*. Did not the *Magicians of Pharaoh*, as well as *Aaron*, cast down their *Rods* upon the Ground, and were not they *transformed* into *Serpents* and *Frogs* equally with his? Did not they change *Water* into *Blood*? And have mortal Men,  
and

and especially wicked Men, opposing the Will of God, any such creating Power, either inherent in themselves, or possible to be conveyed to them, by any Being, good or bad, whatsoever? Must not this then be all Juggle and Imposture, a full and ample Proof of the *deceivable Nature* of our Senses? How did the *Eyes* of the *Sodomites* fail them when they could not see so much as the Door of *Lot's House*, though it stood directly before their Faces?

When *Joshua* commanded the Sun and Moon to *stand still*, and not vary their *Station* for the Space of a *whole Day*, (*Josh. x.*) how incredible is it, that the *Course* of Nature should be thus altered, and the *uniform invariable Revolutions* of the Planets in so *unprecedented* a Manner disturbed and interrupted? And yet the *Israelites* are appealed to as *Eye-witnesses* of the *Fact*; and it is recorded as an *undoubted Truth* in the *genuine Memoirs* of their Nation. Besides, if one Part of the  
Globe



Globe was thus *miraculously enlightened* by the Sun and Moon being arrested in their Course, *other* Parts of the World must needs be *deprived* of the Benefit of these Luminaries for the same Space of Time; and how could so *remarkable* a Darkness, and of so *long Continuance* have failed to be *registered* in the *Chronicles* of *these Nations*? And yet no History in the World, except the *sacred* History, takes the least Notice of so *astounding* an *Event*. Does not this then look like a *Deceptio Visus*, or an *Imposition* upon the *Senses* of one *particular People*, rather than the *faithful Testimony* of *true and authentick Records*? A parallel Instance of the *same Kind* we have in the Days of *Hezekiah*, when the Prophet caused the *Shadow* of the *Dial* of *Abaz* (or according to some Interpreters of the Steps of his Garden) to go back so many *Degrees*, and *invert* its *Course*, as if there was a *real Retrogradation* of the Sun. This could not be without the *whole Course* of our planetary System was *altered*; and if *Abaz* and  
others

[ Others have been thus *deceived*, how is the World in After-ages secured against the *Force* of the *like Illusions*? When our Blessed Saviour was seen *walking upon the Sea*, his most intimate Companions in their Fright and Consternation *fancied* it was a *Spirit*. *Mary Magdalen*, after his Resurrection, *mistook* him for the Gardener. And when he was walking and conversing with *two* of his Disciples in the Way to *Emmaus*, (*Luke xxiv.*) they did not so much as know that it was *he*. And if it be said, the *Reason* of this their *Ignorance* is *assigned*, and that their *Eyes* *were holden* that *they should not know him*, this makes the *Objection* so much the *stronger*; for what becomes of the *Faithfulness* of the *Reports* of our *Senses* if our *Eyes* are thus liable to be *disordered* or *blinded* by *foreign Influence*? After this, he appeared, to the Amazement of all his Disciples, in the very *midst* of *them*, in a Room where the *Doors* were *fastened*, and there was no Passage left *open* for his Entrance (*John xx.*) Now this is absolutely inconsistent with the

Pro-

Properties of a *natural human* Body, and how then could the Disciples *see* or *believe*, or *relate* such things, without being egregiously *imposed* upon? These things require a *particular* and *distinct* Consideration. And if they can be *accounted* for, and *cleared up*, consistently with the *Authority* of *Scripture*, and the *soundest Principles* of *true Philosophy*, the *Objections* against the *Evidence* of our *Senses* will be effectually *confuted*, and their *Testimony* fixed upon a *firm* and *immovable Foundation*. I shall treat of each *fairly* and *impartially* in *their Order*.

H

CASE



## C A S E I.

*Of the Burning Bush.*

**T**HE *true Scripture Representation* of this Case, is, as follows, (*Ex. iii.*)  
*Now Moses — came to the Mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a Flame of Fire, out of the Midst of a Bush ; and he looked, and behold the Bush burned with Fire, and the Bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great Sight, why the Bush is not burnt. And when he is deterred from making any nearer Approach, on account of the Sacredness of the Ground, now hallowed by the immediate Presence of God, a Voice issueth out of the Bush, and maketh this solemn Proclamation, I am the God of thy Father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. This amazing Sight, and these awful Words, we read, had this very natural Effect upon Moses,*  
*that*

that he hid his Face, and was afraid to look upon God. Here is as plain and perfect an Account of a real Miracle, as Words can paint, the Mouth speak, or the Heart of Man conceive. A Bush, though a raging Fire is burning in the midst of it, retains its original Shape and Form, untouched, unhurt, unconsumed. The Fire manifestly appears to be exceeding rapid and violent. No one is surprised that a gentle lambent Flame does not melt Lead, or Iron, or Gold, to which its Degree of Heat is no way proportionate, and if the Fire which Moses saw was so weak and languid, as not to have Strength sufficient to make Impression upon Materials inflammable as Brush-wood, or common Faggots, here was evidently no Cause of his Astonishment and Wonder. It is not without Reason then, that Josephus affirms, that the Flame was strong and vehement. But now the Question is, Was this great Sight, imaginary or real? an Imposition upon the Senses of Moses, by a Phantom, or Resemblance only, or a Body of true and substantial Fire! In order to

determine this, it is necessary to attend closely to the *Scripture Account*, and then to consider the *Weight* and *Force* of the *Objections* which lie against it.

As to the *Scripture Account*; here is as strong Proof as can be given, that this great and astonishing Sight, which Moses saw, was not fallacious but real. His Senses were not impaired, or the Sight of his Eyes obscured or dim, but he had the same Evidence of the Flame burning in the Midst of the Bush, as of the Existence of the Mountain on which he stood. The Information of his Eyes was true and certain, the Fire was real Fire, the Flame was real Flame. He had the same Proof of its streaming out of the Bush, as of the Bush remaining incombustible; and his Testimony in both Cases is equally to be regarded, or equally rejected. He is now going to be sent upon an Expedition, as important as could be undertaken, or executed by Man, and this miraculous Appearance is to be the Ground of his Faith and Trust in God,



God; a *Proof* that he would be with him, and enable him, by a *stretched-out Arm*, by *mighty Signs and Wonders*, to perform what he commissioned him to do. But now can any one imagine that a God of *Wisdom* would send out his *Messenger* on such an *Errand*, without *sure and certain Tokens and Credentials* of his *Divine Authority and Mission*? Or a God of *Truth* impose upon his *faithful Servant*, by a *sham*, and *abusive* and *mock Representation* of Things? What *Hope* or *Confidence* in God could the most astonishing Scene of Wonders incite, if it was still *dubious* and *uncertain*, whether this *Appearance* was not *fictitious* and *imaginary* without any *real Foundation* in *Truth* and in *Nature*? What *Proof* could a *false*, or barely *supposed View* of things be, of the *continual Presence* of God, or the *Interposition* of a *Divine Power*, to work *future real Signs and Wonders*? And yet certain it is, that *Moses*, under the fullest *Assurance* of the *absolute Certainty* of what he *saw* and *heard*, not only *undertook*,  
but

but happily *executed* this great *Work*, to the *Shame* and *Confusion* of his *Rivals* and *Competitors*, who were forced to confess, that the *Miracles* which he wrought, were not *pretended* or *feigned* ones, but the real *Power* or *Finger* of God. Now if all the *succeeding Signs* and *Wonders* which he wrought were not *counterfeit*, but *genuine*, what *clearer Proof* can there be, that the *whole Series* was of the same *Kind* and *Original*, stamped with the same *Divine Impression*, equally *evident* and *infallible*? If *Moses's* Testimony is to be received, when he affirms that the Waters divided and stood on an Heap, to open a Passage for the *Israelites*, when at the same time the Bulwarks were struck down, and *Pharaoh* and his Host were overwhelmed and perished in the Sea, he had no *better Eyes* to see with, nor *clearer Evidence* of the Truth of *this Fact*, than when he saw the *Bush burning*, or rather *unburnt* in the Fire. And if he cannot but believe his own Eyes in *one Case*, why is he not obliged, and why may he not with  
equal

*equal Safety* believe them in the other? The Truth is the *Evidence* in both Cases, is clear and *incontestible*. He received the whole of his Information from a *God of Truth*, who cannot *lye* or *deceive*.

But what then are the *formidable Objections* which are raised to the *Truth* of this *Report*? Why, it is *inconsistent*, it seems, with the *known Properties* of Bodies, the *Nature* of *Fire*, and the settled, *invariable Laws* of *Nature*. Every one knows that *actual Fire* will reduce all *combustible Materials* to *Ashes*; and if the *Fire* which *Moses* saw, had not this Effect, what can be plainer, than that it was only a *false Appearance* or *Resemblance of Fire*, not *real* but *imaginary*? A few Words will suffice to shew the *Vanity* of this Plea. It is indeed a *weak* and *disingenuous Shuffle*, quite altering the *true State* of the *Question*, and raising *Clouds* and *Difficulties* where in *Reality* there are none.

The first *obvious Fallacy* in this *Argument*, is, it concludes from the *present natural*



*natural* State of things, that they will *still* be indued with the *same Properties*, *still* governed by the *same Laws*, and *still* produce the very *same Effects* in *extraordinary* and *supernatural Cases*, which is little better than a *manifest Absurdity* or *Contradiction*. The *great* and *wise Law-giver* of the *Jews* had *truer* and more *rational* Sentiments of things. Had he seen a *Bush* falling into *Ashes*, by *Flames* accidentally kindled, the *Sight* had neither been worthy of his *Curiosity* nor *Wonder*. It was the *Novelty*, the *surprising* and *unaccountable Nature* of the thing which raised his *Attention* and *Astonishment*; and he proceeds to *account* for it, not by denying the Evidence of his *Senses*, but by affirming the *Case* to be *extraordinary* and *miraculous*, the Effect not of any *natural Cause*, but of a *supernatural* and truly *divine* Interposition.

2. To affirm that the *Flame* which *Moses* saw was not a *Flame of real Fire*, because the *Bush* was *unconsumed*, is so far

far from being a *reasonable*, that it is in truth a downright *blasphemous* Assertion. It is, in effect, to declare, that *that* God, who gave *Being* and *Laws* to *all* the *Works* of *Nature*, has not *Power* to reverse or change, or even *suspend* *Laws* of his own making. The *Objection* would be of *equal* *Strength* against what *Moses* heard, as against what he saw. The awful Declaration, *I am the God of thy Father*, &c. might as well be represented as *vain* and *chimericdl*, because in a *Bush*, or *Flame of Fire*, there was no *human* *Mouth* or *Organs of Speech*, from whence such a *Voice* could *possibly* proceed. But they who make such trifling *Exceptions*, know neither the *Scriptures*, nor the *Power of God*, (*Exod. iv. 11.*) God himself appeals unto *Moses*, *Who hath made Man's Mouth?* or *Who maketh the Dumb, or Deaf, or the Seeing, or the Blind?* have not I the *Lord*? Can that *God* who *created* all things, want any *Perfection* that he has bestowed upon his *Creatures*? *He that*

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made

made the Eye, shall he not see? Or he that gave Man his Mouth, be doomed to eternal Silence, without any Possibility of Speech or Utterance? Now if it be absurd and impious, notwithstanding God is a Spirit, and destitute of all corporeal Organs, to suppose him incapable of forming articulate Sounds, and speaking with a clear and intelligible Voice, is it not equally absurd, and equally impious, to suggest that he cannot restrain the Violence of Fire, and preserve Bodies naturally perishable from Decay or Corruption? And if this is the Truth of the Case, the Argument that the Fire was not real, because the Bush remained unconsumed, has no manner of Weight, nor is it any Proof of Defect or Imperfection, in the Senses of Moses, but vain and atheistical, and levelled directly against the Power of God. To say that God cannot do any thing, within the Compass of Power, is using not the Reason of a Man, but the Language of a Fool; of that Fool, who hath said in his Heart (Psal. liii. 1.)  
there



*there is no God. For a God devoid of Power, or any other possible Perfection, is manifestly degraded from his Divinity, and sunk down to a poor and helpless Idol, not the Sovereign Lord, and omnipotent Commander of the Universe, but a Creature of a vain and sickly Imagination, a despicable Object of Contempt and Derision.*

## C A S E II.

*Of the Contest betwixt Moses,  
Aaron, and Pharaoh's Magi-  
cians.*

**T**HIS possibly may seem a Case of greater Difficulty, a much harder Task to reconcile the present *Appearances of Deception*, with the *unerring Truth* of the *Information* of our *Senses*. And yet I am greatly mistaken, if this may not be done *consistently* with the *Authority of God's Word*, and to the *Conviction* of every *unbiassed and sincere Enquirer*. To this End, let it be observed,

That the Scripture Account, though *true and authentick*, sufficient to answer *all Purposes*, but those of a *wanton Curiosity*, or *useless Impertinence*, is nevertheless very *short and concise*. There was no Occasion in a *thing just transacted*, to recite *all Particulars*, and give an  
exact

*exact Detail of every separate Punctilio and Circumstance. The least Hint of a Fact so notorious, in every one's Mouth, and gainsaid by no-body, was enough for the present Generation, fully apprised of every Particular; and it was not the Business or Intent of Moses, in his very short Account, to guard against all the idle Cavils, and frivolous Impertinencies of Objectors in future Ages. It had indeed been vain and superfluous to have done this, when once his very Rivals acknowledged their Defeat, and confessed that the Miracles wrought by Aaron, were the Finger of God; the Point was gained, the Cause was given up, and it would have looked like Suspicion or Distrust of the Truth and Goodness of it, to have taken further unnecessary Pains, and laboured the Proof of a Point, universally acknowledged as incontestible. What Occasion had he to relate, (what every one then knew) that Moses and his Brother were encountered by an equal Number of Magicians, and that their Names were Jannes and Jambres? (2 Tim. iii. 6.) If these things*



things have come to our Knowledge since, by *After-Records* and *Accounts*, this is a *Confirmation* of the *Truth* of *Scripture-History*, and a *Proof* of the *Notoriety* of the *Facts*, when there was nothing else wanting for *Moses* to do, than to give a *bare Hint* of them in the *shortest Manner*. But now, if his *Account* be so very *brief* and *concise*, it cannot be surprising if, after a *Succession* of so *many Ages*, when other *traditional Accounts* are *lost*, and *original Circumstances* quite *forgotten*, there should be some *Obscurity* and *Darkness* in it. This must necessarily be the Case of *all short Abstracts* of *antient History*. But then any *Difficulties* of *this Kind*, if at so great a *Distance* of *Time* really *unsurmountable*, can no more affect the *Truth* of his *Memoirs*, than those of any other very *antient, credible Historian*. The only Use I would make of this Observation is, that we can't expect so *full*, and *clear* and *satisfactory* a *Solution* of all *Doubts* and *Difficulties* which may now arise, as a more *copious* and *explicit* Relation of all  
*Articles*

*Articles* might have afforded us. But though it be *just* and *equitable*, that the Writings of *Moses* should be read with the same *Candour* and *Indulgence*, as the *Antiquities* of any other *eminent Historian*, yet I would fain flatter myself, that in the present Case, we do not stand in need, even of this *favourable Allowance*, but that we have *Light* sufficient for all our Purposes. Let us then consult him, as our *faithful Guide*. Take his Account in his own Words.

*And Moses and Aaron (Exod. vii. 10.) went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so, as the Lord had commanded: And Aaron cast down his Rod before Pharaoh, and it became a Serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the Wisemen, and the Sorcerers: Now the Magicians in Egypt, they also did in like manner with their Enchantments. For they cast down every Man his Rod, and they became Serpents. But Aaron's Rod, now a real Serpent, swallowed up their Rods, or the Serpents sub-*

substituted in their room. Upon these Words, who can help making the following Observations?

1. *Moses and Aaron boldly challenge, and lay Claim to a divine Authority and Power. The Wisemen and Sorcerers, act under the Command and Influence of Pharaoh, pretend to no divine Power or Commission, but trust to their own Art and Skill in Magick, and rely entirely and solely, upon the Virtue of Charms and Incantations.*

2. *As Pharaoh apprehended nothing less than the Loss of the Service of the whole Hebrew Nation, if he consented to the Request of Moses, to let them go, so he must be strongly bias'd and prejudiced in Favour of those Men, whom, by Reason of their bold Pretensions to supernatural Power, he made Choice of to counteract, and equal him in his mighty Works. He had a great worldly Interest at heart, which would blind his Eyes,*



*Eyes, and pervert his Judgment, and make him give Credit to any Evidence, which did but seem favourable to his own Wishes and Inclinations,*

3. It is *probable* that the *Rod of Aaron* was converted into a Serpent of the most *noxious* and *venemous* Kind, which was certainly the Case when *Moses's Rod* was thus *transformed*, or he would have had no Occasion, (*Ex. iv. 3.*) to *flee from before it*. And it is *certain* that the *Serpents* produced by the *Magicians* were both much *less* in *Size*, (for they were *swallowed up* by *Aaron's Serpent*) and *probably* of a *harmless* and *inoffensive* Nature.

4. Though we learn upon the Authority of *St. Paul*, that *Jannes* and *Jambres* were the two *principal Actors* in this *Competition*, yet it seems by *Moses's Account*, that *many more* were *present* at least, if not concerned in the *Contest*, for he expressly assures us,

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that *besides* what the *Magicians* did with their *Incantments*, *Pharaoh* also called the *Wisemen* and the *Sorcerers*. Now in case of any *Juggle* or *Imposition*, here were *Associates* and *Confederates* in the *Plot*, ready at hand to carry on the *Cheat*, and *influenced* by the *Hopes* of all the *Favours* and *Honours*, which a *great* and *splendid Court* could grant to *promote the Delusion*.

5. The turning of the *Rods* into *Serpines* by the *Magicians* is ascribed *not to the Power of God*, but to their *own Skill in Enchantments*. Now it is an *Enquiry* of very great *Importance*, *Was this even possible?* Or what was the *real Skill* and *Power* of these Men? *Power* it is certain they could have *none*, but what derived to them from the *Gods* which they worshipped. What then were these *Gods*? Either *fabulous* and *fictitious* ones which never had *Being* but in the *Brains*, or rather *Dreams* of those, who gave them their *Existence*,  
mere

mere *Vanities* and *Nothings*, or else —  
*Dead Men* or *Women*, deify'd by their  
*Fellow Mortals*, on Account of the *eminent Services* they had done their *Country*, or the *Usefulness* of their *extraordinary Inventions*, whilst upon Earth. (It would be doing them too great Honour, to add to these the *Names* of *mighty Princes* and *Conquerors*, whom the Voice of *Sycophants* and *Flatterers* has *immortalized* and *enthroned* in Heaven, for their *Inhumanity*, and *Robberies*, and continually repeated *Murders*, to the *wasting* and *depopulating* of the Earth. These *execrable Tyrants*, the *Plagues* and *Scourges* of Mankind, ought not to be mentioned but with a *Brand* of *Infamy*, or thought of but with *Detestation* and *Horror*.) The *Sun*, and *Moon*, and *Planets*, and *Earth*, or *Seas*, or even *subterraneous Regions*, have been appointed, as *Seats* of *Residence* to these *imaginary Deities*, and *Virtues* of *diverse Kinds* and *Qualities*, hence appropriated, and ascribed to the *Influence* of  
K 2                      *Stars*,



*Stars, as wonderful and real, as the Presence, or Powers, or Godhead of their new Inhabitants : Mighty, without doubt then must be the Feats and Atchievements of the blind Votaries of such impotent imaginary Gods and Goddeses as these !*

Carmina vel cœlo possunt deducere  
lunam. Virg. Ec.

must certainly be spoke with a very grave and *serious Air*, and the Heart of the Poet, deeply affected, when he introduces his *Prodigies* and *Apparitions*, and embellishes his Description of *Ghosts* of departed Heroes, with all the Circumstances of *Pomp* and *Solemnity*, and *Dread* and *Horror*. With what a Spirit of *true satirical Raillery*, does his *intimate Friend*, and favourite Companion *Horace*, shudder and tremble, and cry for *Quarter* and *Mercy* at the Hands of the *powerful, insulting, inexorable Canidia* ? (*Hor. Od.*) And how must these great Men, both *professed Epicureans*, laugh inwardly at the *Credulity* of those poor deluded Wretches, who  
could

could even *think* they were in earnest, whilst, with the most cutting *Sneer*, they were only *ridiculing* and *exposing* the *Vanity* of these *weak* and *superstitions Foo-leries*? Let them speak their *real Sentiments*, and then

Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula,  
fagas,  
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque Thes-  
fala rides? *Hor. Epist. ult.*

is the *Language* of their *Hearts*, and they express themselves as the *sage* and *wise* *Consulters* of the *Oracles* of *Truth* and *Reason*. It is but of *small Weight* to object here, that the *greatest Men* in the most *powerful Republicks*, *supported* and *countenanced* these *Errors* ——— that the *Romans* in particular, had their *Augures* and *Auruspices*, ——— that none but *Senators*, or *Persons* of *high Rank* and *Eminence* were admitted to these *honour-able distinguishing Offices* ——— that the *noted Oracles* in *remote Countries*, were sent to, and *consulted* on any *Emergencies*  
of

of State, — and that even the *Laws of the twelve Tables*, supposed the *Truth and Efficacy of magical Charms and Operations*, in which are these Words, *Qui fruges incantassit, — neve alienam segetem pollexeris*. For all this proves only, that the *greatest Statesmen*, and most *consummate Politicians*, did not think it unbecoming their *Wisdom or Dignity*, to take Advantage of the *Credulity of the deluded Multitude*, and to promote the *Interest of their Country*, even by *stooping to encourage popular Errors and Superstitions*. In the mean time, what the *Sentiments of the wise and sagacious* were concerning the *Reality of these Powers*, appears evidently from the following Citation, *Sen. Lib. 4. Nat. Quæst. Et apud nos in lege duodecim Tabularum cavetur, ne quis alienas fruges excantassit; Rudis adhuc antiquitas credebatur, et attrahi imbres cantibus et repelli, quorum nihil posse fieri, tam palam est, ut ejus rei causâ nullius Philosophi Schola intranda sit. And even amongst ourselves, sufficient Provision is made by the Law of*  
*the*



*the twelve Tables, that no one by the Virtue of Charms transplant his Neighbour's Corn into his own Field. For our Forefathers were so extremely ignorant, as to believe that even Showers might be procured or diverted, by the Efficacy of Incantations, the Impossibility of which is as manifest, as that there never was a School erected upon this Plan by any one Philosopher to teach the Art. What a Farce and ridiculous Scene of Pageantry, would it now seem, to have a renowned General, gone abroad on an important Expedition, recalled hastily from the Head of his Army, to assist in a solemn, religious Procession, only because a Lamb has been yeanned with two Heads, a Tower or Church struck with Lightning, or the World been amused with fabulous Reports, of a Cow that was heard to speak, or Showers of Stones that fell in certain Places ! And yet how many Roman Consuls, on Occasions frivolous as these, have been recalled from the Armies they commanded, or Dictators chose, to avert the Wrath of Heaven, portended by these*  
*Prodigies,*

*Prodigies*, by performing the *sacred Ceremony* of driving a *Nail* into the *Temple*? And the doing this with the *Gravity* and *Authority* of the *chief Magistrate* in *Rome*, and with a *religious Awe and Reverence*, has raised their Reputation, and made them as *venerable* for their *Piety*, as the *Laurels* they had *before reaped*, had done on account of their *Courage*, and *military Skill* and *Conduct* in the *Day of Battle*. The Consulting the *Flight of Birds*, or inspecting the *Entrails* of Beasts slain for *Sacrifice*, in order to discover the *Fate* of Battles, or the *Issue* of other *important Events*, would always be *laugh at*, by the *sober* and *judicious* Part of Mankind. But if *favourable* and *propitious Omens* would raise the Spirits of a *drooping Army*, and give them *assured Hopes* of *Success* and *Victory*, it was thought not inconsistent with the *Maxims* of the *soundest Policy* to preserve themselves and Country, even by the *low Arts* of *Deceit* and *Imposture*. For the same Reason, the *Sybilline Oracles* were intrusted only in the Hands  
of

of the *Decemviri*, or great and wise Men, to be produced as *Occasions of State* should require, to mould and influence the Hearts of a *stubborn*, but yet governable, because a greatly *blinded* and *superstitious* People. And if *Demosthenes* could observe, that *Apollo's Oracle* at *Delphos* had learned *Φιλιππίζειν*, the *Romans* were not insensible of the *Advantages* to be derived from *thence*, nor ignorant of the *Ways and Means* to obtain *Answers propitious and favourable*, as their Hearts could wish. But still all this shews, not the *Prescience* or *Power* of false Gods, but the *Skill and Art* of *political Governors*, to make the most *corrupt Religion* an *Engine of State-Craft*, and to extract some present *temporal Good*, out of the most *horrid of spiritual Evils*.

But we need not remain under *Doubts* and *Difficulties*, or lose ourselves in *Labyrinths* and *Mazes*, if we will but consult the *Word of God*. There we shall find that these *bold Pretenders to Power more than human*, instead of being able

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to *disturb* and *confound* the *Peace* and *Order* of *Nature*, were, like the *Gods* they *worshipped*, *weak* and *impotent*, and had no *Strength* or *Help* in them. The whole *Tribe*, ranged under whatever *Denomination*, whether of *Soothsayers*, *Diviners*, *Wizards*, *Necromancers*, *Astrologers*, *Sorcerers*, *Magicians*, or *Consulters* of *familiar Spirits*, is condemned in the *Lump*, never mentioned but with *Abhorrence* and *Contempt*, and so far from being considered as possessed of *divine supernatural Powers*, that it is made a *capital Offence*, in the *People* of *God*, but to *consult* them, or give the least *Credit* to their *idle* and *impious Pretensions* (Lev. xx. 6.) How remarkably *strong* and *cogent* is the *Reason* of the *Prohibition* (Deut. xviii. 10, 11, 12.) *When thou art come into the Land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the Abominations of these Nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his Son or his Daughter to pass through the Fire, or*  
*that*

*that useth Divinations, or an Observer of Times, or an Inchanter, or a Witch, or a Charmer, or Consulter with familiar Spirits, or a Wizard, or a Necromancer; for all that do these things are an Abomination to the Lord; and because of these Abominations, shall the Lord thy God drive them out from before thee. They are waging War with Heaven, and so far from profiting those who consult them, that they shall not be able to save themselves from Destruction. It must be confessed, these Terms are understood, in such different Senses, by the Learned, that there is great Difficulty in determining their true and precise Meaning, and from hence collecting the various Powers, or Claims of those, to whom they are applied. In all Languages, Words, in process of Time, deviate from their primitive Meaning, and are used in a good, or bad Sense, according to the prevailing Customs or Opinions of Ages. What our Translators call Witches, some have rendered Poisoners, Mixers of*

*baneful* Drugs to destroy innocent People, others, *Conjecturers*, or *Pretenders* to the working of *Miracles*, nay some learned Men have even translated it *wise Women*; though it is very certain, (*Ex. xxii. 18.*) *Thou shalt not suffer a wise Woman to live*, could never be the *true original* Meaning of the *Law*. The *Vulgar Opinions* of *Witchcraft*, even still too prevailing, are all *Novelties* of *modern Growth*, the Product of *dark* and *superstitious Ages*, unheard of in the Days of the *antient Prophets*, and unknown even in the Times of the *Holy Apostles*. The Phrase *Consulters of familiar Spirits*, has nothing at all, it seems, to *support* or *countenance* it in the *Hebrew Language*, but might, with *greater Propriety*, have been rendered, *Consulters of Oracles*, *Diviners*, or *Miracle-mongers*, than explained by an *Assemblage* of Words of *no Use* but to confirm *gross Errors*, and *vulgar* but *horrid Superstitions*. In like Manner, the Word *Magicians* was not always a Name of *Reproach* but of *Honour*. The three eminent Persons who came by the

*Leading*



*Leading of a Star* to worship our *Blessed Saviour*, were *Magi*, or *Magicians*, but yet considered by all Christians, not as *infamous Wretches*, but as *wise Men*, or *venerable Eastern Sages*. And whenever the *Sorceries*, *Witchcrafts*, *Divinations*, &c. forbidden by God, as *Abominations* in his Sight, are confined to a *bad* Sense, we are not to search for the *true Meaning* of these Words in *modern Books*, where *new* Notions and Opinions are adopted, *unheard* of in *former Ages*, but may, with much greater Safety, understand them, of *Arts* and *Devices*, by *pretended Inspirations* and *Visions*, or *consulting* of *Oracles*, or *lying Signs* or *Wonders*, to seduce Men from the Worship of the true God to that of Idols. The Attempt of the Priests of *Baal*, (1 Kings xviii. 26.) to extort an Answer from their God by *Leapings*, and *antick Gesticulations*, and *cutting themselves with Knives and Lancers*, 'till the Blood gushed out upon them, sufficiently explains of what Nature the *Whoredoms* and many  
*Witch-*

*Witchcrafts of Jezebel were, (2 Kings ix. 22.) whose Heart was fully set upon banishing the God of Israel, and establishing the Worship of Baal. Like the Mother of Harlots, and Abominations of the Earth, stigmatized in the Revelations, (Chap. xii.) she sought to make the Inhabitants of the Earth drunk with the Wine, or poisonous Doctrines, and Filthiness of her spiritual Fornication. But her Power was vain, as that of the God in which she trusted. She might have joined her Priests in their Vociferation, and cried to this very Day, O Baal, hear us, without there being any Voice, or Power able to return an Answer. The good Prophet's severe Rebuke and Insult, when he calls upon them (1 Kings xviii. 27.) to cry aloud, for he is a God, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a Journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked, is really a Compliment upon such a God, and a kind of Apology for his deluded Worshippers. For this supposes him possessed of some Degree of Sense and Perception, of a Power*  
of

of *Sleeping and Dreaming* at least, (glorious Prerogatives of a divine Nature!) whereas the Scripture represents the *Idols* of the *Heathens* as *mere Stocks and Stones*, quite destitute of the least Symptom of *Life or Sensation*, which can neither *see*, nor *hear*, nor *speak*, nor *move*, nor *stir* to *help themselves*, or *those who trust* in them. Can then any believe, that the *blind Worshipers* of *such a God* (and such were the *Magicians* of *Pharaoh*) were ever invested with a *truly divine Power*, an *incommunicable Attribute* of the *Most High*, and enabled to *create Serpents*, or give *Life* to *inanimate Substances*? They must not presume to mark others with a *Brand of Credulity*, who can believe such *impious Absurdities* themselves. I cannot easily be induced to think, that such *strange Notions* could ever have gained Credit in the World, if the *prevailing Opinion* of *Devils presiding* and delivering out *Oracles* in the *Temples* of *Heathens*, had not given a *Handle* to *over-zealous Christian Apologists* to *magnify the Power* of *Satan*, in order  
that



that the *Glory* of *God* might be more conspicuous by the *Conquests* of those illustrious Champions, who were daily reported to put to *silence*, and *triumph* over the *Powers of Darkneſs*. But this Point I leave to the Diſcuſſion of the Learned, engaged in the Controverſy concerning the *Continuance* of *Miracles* in the Church after the *Deceafe* of the Apoſtles. Not that I think that there are *plain Rules* wanting for the Direction of *sincere well-meaning Chriſtians*, in theſe Caſes. The following *duly obſerved*, and *judiciously applied*, muſt be a great *Preſervative* againſt *Error*.

1. Where *notorious Impoſtures* have been *detected*, as in the *Oracles* of the *Heathens*, it behoves us to be *exceeding circumſpect* and *cautious*, how we give *credit* to any Reports, which ſeem to *favour* or *countenance* the *Cauſe of Idolatry*.

2. A *God of Truth* cannot *deny* himſelf, or a *jealous God* give his *peculiar Honour* to another. This would not be  
doing

doing *Justice* to the *great* and *incomprehensibly glorious Attributes* of his own *most perfect Nature*. But a *true* and *righteous* Being can no more act *unjustly* with respect to *himself*, than *unequally* and *partially* with respect to others. Consequently, all *Pretenders* to *divine Powers*, acting in *Opposition* to the *Holy Name of God*, are *notorious Cheats and Impostures*.

3. We are exhorted, (1 *John* iv. 1.) *Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they be of God*. Examine with all *Care* and *Accuracy* the *Credentials* of those who lay claim to *spiritual Powers*. And we have a plain *Rule* to walk by, (*Mat.* vii. 20.) *By their Fruits ye shall know them*. *Bad Men*, however their *Lives disgrace* their *Profession*, may be *Preachers of Truth and Righteousness*. Thus the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* sat in *Moses's Chair*, and by the *Authority* of *Christ himself*, were to be heard, whilst they taught the *pure* and *uncorrupted Doctrines* of the *Law*. But had these

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*same Men, though of ever so great Repute for Sanctity of Life and Manners, nay, though they had attempted to prove the Truth of their Doctrines by Signs and Wonders, advanced any thing in Favour of Idols, or inconsistent with sound Morality, these were Fruits, by which they would be known to be Deceivers, not faithful Disciples of Moses, but Apostates from the Holy and living God. Of a similar Nature is the Rule (Deut. xviii. 22.) to distinguish false Prophets from true. If any Man, in support of Idolatry, give a Sign or a Wonder, which comes not to pass, this is a plain Proof that a God of Truth has not sent him, but he hath spoken of himself, and presumptuously, and it is added, thou shalt not be afraid of him. It is not said, if the Sign or the Wonder do come to pass, thou shalt receive him as a true Prophet; for great Sagacity in considering the present Conjunction of Affairs, or the Nature of Causes and Effects, or even a lucky Conjecture, may in some Cases enable Men to seem to have the Knowledge*



ledge of *Futurity*; but if the *Prediction* fails, this demonstrates him to be a *false* one; and as nothing can prove a *Falshood* to be *Truth*, or *Idolatry* and *Piety* the same thing, the *Thing* foretold, or the *Sign* given to prove this, cannot be *real*, or the *Work* of *God*, but the *Delusion* of *Man*, or *evil Spirits*, counterfeit and *spurious*. So that there is not that *Difficulty* in trying the *Spirits*, whether they be of *God*, which may be imagined. The most weighty *Truths*, are those which are plainest and most easy to be understood. And in order to discern these, it is not great and extensive *Knowledge*, so much as an *honest Heart*, and *pious Disposition* of *Mind* that is wanted: We know who hath said, speaking of his *Heavenly Father*, (*John* vii. 17.) *If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God.* *Est ubi vel vulgus rectum videt.* Instances are not wanting, where the meanest have embraced the *Truth*, whilst the *Wise* and *Learned*, almost to a *Man*, have been fast bound in the *Chains* of *Error*. Thus the *People*

(*John vii. 49.*) who were so *despised* and hated, and even held *accursed* for their extreme *Ignorance* of the *Law*, and not following the Example of the *Rulers and Pharisees*, shewed themselves *wiser* than these their *righteous Judges*, by *believing in Christ*, whilst the *whole Body* of their *great Council* conspir'd to *reject*, and deliver him up to be *crucified*, as a *Deceiver of the People*. In short, the *Spirits may be tryed*, by all *sincere*, and *virtuous*, and *well-disposed Men*. And this may be laid down as an *infallible Rule or Touch-stone*, no *Signs*, no *Wonders*, no *Miracles* can be *true*, which *overturn* the *Foundations* of *moral Goodness*, or are inconsistent with the *Attributes*, or *essential Perfections* of *God*.

4. *A Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*, (*Mark iii. 24.*) This is equally true of *all Kingdoms*, whether of *God* and of *Righteousness*, or of *Satan* and the *Powers of Darkness*. And to suppose any thing like a *Coalition* of these *clashing* and *opposite Interests*, seems as great an  
*Absurdity*

*Absurdity* as can well enter into the Heart of Man. The extreme *unaccountable Diffidence* and *Caution*, with which some Christian Writers express themselves on this Head, as not knowing for what *inscrutable Reasons* the Providence of God may permit *Evil* and *seducing Spirits*, to work *Signs* and *Wonders*, whether for the *Manifestation* of his own *Glory*, or the *Superiority* of his *faithful Servants*, enabled to *triumph* over them, seems rather to favour more of *Piety of Intention*, than *Soundness of Judgment*. For my own Part, I freely confess, that with the utmost *Strength* of *Imagination*, I cannot easily frame a more *ludicrous* and *childish Image*, than that of the *Father of Lights*, arrayed in *unapproachable Glory*, standing forth to *outshine* and *eclipse* the *faint Glimmering of Brightness*, discoverable in a *poor, wretched* and *despicable Glow-worm*, for such is all *created Strength*, when compared with the *Arm of the Almighty*. What Being, whether in Heaven or on Earth, can stand before his *Presence*, who, with a  
*Word*



*Word of his Mouth, a Breath of his Displeasure, or a Frown of his Countenance, can, in a Moment, dash all Rival Powers into Nothing? Instead therefore of supposing him to enable seducing Spirits to encounter his faithful Servants, or grant them even Permission to do Evil, though their certain Defeat is to be the Consequence of so vain a Competition, how much more applicable are the Apostle's Words, on this Occasion, and more convincing to a rational Mind, (2 Cor. vi. 14.) What Fellowship hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness? and what Communion hath Light with Darkness? — and what Agreement hath the Temple of God (much less God himself) with Idols? But there is no Hint of the Interposition of Devils in the Contest between Aaron and the Magicians, or any such Notion prevailing in the Writings or Time of Moses. And if it be boldly asserted, that a creating Power here challenged by mortal Men, was all Delusion and Imposture, the Adversaries of revealed Religion, are*  
allowed

allowed *free Liberty* to make the best  
 they can of the *Concession*. Are we so?  
 they will say; why then *Io! triumphe!*  
 the *Conquest* is gained, the *Evidence* of  
*Sense* is controuled and discarded, and the  
*mighty Miracles* of divine Revelation, are  
 dwindled into the *meagre Shape* of vile  
*Trick* and *Imposture*. Not too fast, good,  
 dear, hasty Sirs! you may chance to be  
 stopped short in your Career, and soon  
 obliged to retract your *rash* and *groundless*  
*Affertion*. The Cause of *revealed Reli-*  
*gion*, or the Honour of the *true Prophets*  
 of God, I hope, is not to be affected by  
 there being *Cheats* and *Deceivers* to be  
 found amongst an *idolatrous People*. The  
 Miracles of the *former* are *true* and *cer-*  
*tain*, of the *latter*, only *lying Wonders*,  
 and *infamous Impostures*. But how does  
 this appear when *Moses* describes *both*  
 in Terms *equally* strong, as if they were  
 really *equally* miraculous? Thus if *Aaron's*  
*Rod* became a Serpent, those of the Magi-  
 cians, he uses the same Word, *became*  
*Serpents* also. Now if in the *one Case*  
 the *Metamorphosis* was *real*, and in the  
 other

*other counterfeit and spurious, how is it consistent with the Character of a faithful Historian, or true Prophet, not to intimate that the Transformation, pretended to be wrought by the Magicians, was in Appearance only, and probably had not even this Appearance to any but Pharaoh and his Associates? In answer to this Objection, let the following Particulars be well considered.*

1. It is natural to think that the Magicians would represent *their* Case, at least as *favourably* as *Moses* has done, and not to the *Diminution* of their own Power.

2. It was not worth while to contradict *their* Account, if the *Operation* was so *clumsy* and *bungling*, that every discerning Person might from this *very Account* see thro' the *Contrivance*, and detect the *Cheat*. Now there are several very *suspicious Circumstances* in this Relation, which seem to *expose* the *Tricks* and *Impostures* of these Men.

It



It required no more *Art* or *Power* to create a *Wand* or *Rod*, than a *Serpent*. If therefore they had been *actually possessed* of a *divine Power* of *Creation*, they might have gone on with the Contest, first have *created fresh Rods*, and then have *converted* these again into *Serpents*, and by *repeated Experiments*, have given fuller Demonstration of their *Art* and *Power*. But this they *never* attempted, which was a kind of tacit Acknowledgment, that on their *Serpents* being *devoured*, their Skill was at an end. They could not so much as *produce* fresh *Wands*, and if these had been ready at hand, had probably no *fresh Supply* of *Serpents*, wherewith to renew the Attempt.

3. The *Feats* they opposed to the *Miracles* of *Aaron*, were of such a Nature, as any common Artist or Juggler might attempt and succeed in. With what Ease would a dexterous Fellow, who imposes upon a Room full of Company,

N

by

by shewing an *empty Bag*, and then producing out of it *Plenty of Eggs*, and afterwards the *Hen* supposed to lay them, repeat the same Experiment with a *few harmless Frogs*, or *innocent Serpents*? But if his Bag was taken away from him, the Eggs all broke, and the Hen killed, or swallowed up before his Eyes, then, as in the Case of the Magicians, his *Power* would *vanish*, and the *Cheat* be *discovered*. As to the *changing*, or rather *seeming* to Change, a small Quantity, possibly only a little Phial of *Water* into *Blood*, how easily would this be effected by any Person of the least Skill in Chemistry, who by a Mixture of transparent Liquors, knows how *instantaneously* to produce *Colours* of various Complexions? And then as to their *failure* in the Attempt by *their Incantments*, to convert *Dust* into *Lice*; this seems manifestly to discover their *Weakness*, and *fraudulent Practices*. To cause every *Atom* of a *Heap* of *breathless Dust*, to move and struggle into *Life*, would be

a Demonstration of a *truly divine, creating* Power. But this was an Enterprize too hardy for a *Deceiver* to *hope* to succeed in. How was the Dust prepared to be animated, to be *conveyed* away, *unseen* from the Sight of the Spectators? How was an *equal Quantity* of *Lice* to be introduced *invisibly*, and in an *instant*, to supply its Place? These Reptiles, whether brought in a Bag, or any other Convenience, would so cling to the Sides, and require so much Time, and Pains, to clear them out and lay them on an Heap, that there would be Leisure for a Man half blind to discover the Imposture. Here, therefore, the Magicians give up the Cause, acknowledge the *Superiority* of *Aaron's* Power, and confess that the *enlivened Dust* is the *Finger of God*. After this *open ingenuous* Confession, was it then worthy of the *Sagacity* of *Moses* to observe that their Pretensions to *divine Power* in other Instances, was *vile Sham* and *Delusion*? The Nature of the whole



Tranfaction discovered it. When he himself received his Commission, the Power which he received from above, was so *astonishingly* great, that he is assured, he shall even be a *God* unto *Pharaoh*. Accordingly *Heaven, Earth, and Seas* were subject to his *Voice* and *Authority*. He had the Power of *Rain* and *Thunder*, of *Light* and *Darkness*, of *Life* and *Death* in his Hands. And when *Aaron*, by his Direction, turned the *Water* into *Blood*, this was not in a *small inconsiderable Quantity*, (which probably was the Case of the Magicians) but whole Rivers, and Ponds, and Pools of Water (*Exod. vii. 19.*) *stagnated* and *putrified*, not discoloured by Art, but partaking of the Nature of *real Blood*, infomuch that the very Fishes that were in the Rivers were *poisoned*, and *died*. Now here was a *mighty Miracle* apparently and *confessedly* such, and wrought in the Sight of *all the Egyptians*. Was it then consistent with the *Character* and *Dignity* of *Moses*, to  
 remark,

remark, that so *wonderful a Work of God*, was of a different Stamp from the *little Slights and crafty Contrivances* of the Magicians. No. The Competition would be shameful ; nor could any, without such Information, be so weak and blind, as not to perceive the *amazing, infinite Difference*. But still, if only *Pharaoh* and his Adherents were imposed upon, Cavillers will be ready to object, what becomes of the *Certainty* of the *Evidence of Sense*, if we cannot believe what we see *done before our own Eyes* ? Do not be in a *Panick* upon this Account. *Believe only your own Eyes*, and give Credit to nothing, but what you *plainly and clearly* see, and you are effectually *secured from Deceit and Error*. In the present Case, the *Facts* you are to examine *diligently, carefully, and attentively*, are these. The *Serpents* produced both by *Aaron* and the *Magicians*, are *real Serpents*, so far your Senses *certainly* inform you, and their Testimony is *clear and true*. By what  
*secret,*

*secret clandestine Measures the Magicians Rods are conveyed out of Sight, you see not, and herein your Eyes do not deceive you by false Evidence, for they give no Evidence at all. They Report truly what they see, and that only ; but further these Deponents say not. If from hence indeed, you rashly, and unadvisedly conclude, that the Magicians Rods, like that of Aaron, are miraculously transformed into Substances of a different Nature, it is very possibly you may be deceived ; but then this is an Error, not of your Sight, but of your Judgment ; and what you miscall an Imposition of your Senses, is intirely owing to your own Heedlessness and Inattention. Consider this with Fairness and Impartiality, and you will see, and be obliged to own, that the Evidence of Sense, is not dubious and uncertain, nor the Account of Moses romantick and fabulous, or liable to any just and reasonable Exception. I have Reason to ask Pardon*  
for



for swelling this Article, to so *immoderate* a length, unless the very *Digressions* are *useful*, and will be *candidly* admitted, as a sufficient Apology.

CASE

## C A S E III.

*Concerning the Sodomites not being able to find the Door of Lot's House.*

**I**F I *trespassed* too long upon the Reader's Patience, in the last Case, this will be some Relief to him, as it is sufficiently *plain* and *clear*. The Scripture Account (*Gen. xix. 11.*) is very *brief* and *concise*, the Objection *weak* and *trifling*, and consequently the Answer need not be *prolix* and *tedious*. We have here an Instance of a very *remarkable Interposition* of Providence, to check the *Insults* of a most *profligate Race* of Men, whose Hearts were burning with *impure detestable Lusts*, and meditating more than *brutal*, even the most *horrid* and *outrageous Acts* of Violence and Injustice. To *blast the Councils*, and *defeat the Purposes* of these *abandon'd shameless Miscreants*, God, by his

his Angels, smites them with Blindness, Scotomy, such a *Dimness* and *Confusion* of Sight, that they are not able to find out the Place they had fixed on, as the *Scene* of their *premeditated Villainy*. And is there any thing in this *unworthy* of, or *impossible* with God? When he *stretches out his Hand* against Wickedness of a kind too *enormous* and *flagrant* for either *Heaven* or *Earth* to bear, *Doth not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Is there any thing in the Nature of this Miracle to make us scruple the *Expediency*, the *Usefulness*, or *Truth* and *Certainty* of it? Why — Yes — truly, it seems to *confound* or *take away* the *Evidence* of our *Senses*. For what sort of *Witnesses* must they be, who *own* that they do not *so much as see* what stands *directly* before them? But surely this is a *shameful*, and most *perverse* Representation of the Matter. Even the *Sodomites*, wicked as they are, *speak Truth*, as far as their *Testimony* goes, when they

O

declare



declare, that the *Hand of God is upon them*, and has *smitten them with Blindness*. They are capable of *witnessing* what they do *not see*, as well as what they *do*. Their Case is not of a *Deception*, but a *Deprivation of Sight*. The *Acknowledgement of their Darkness* is a *Proof of the Truth of the Information* of their Senses. They testify what they now *clearly feel* and perceive, that *one Sense*, by the righteous Judgment of Heaven, is *taken away*, or the *Sight of their Eyes departed* from them. Nay even their *very Silence*, whilst they grope about as in the Dark, *proclaims* their *remorseless Guilt and Shame*, as well as the *Justice and Glory of God*. And to dispute the *Truth of the Miracle*, as if it was not in the *Power of Heaven*, thus to *visit the Sins and Abominations of Men*, is to entertain Sentiments of the *blackest Impiety*, and as *atheistical* as can enter into the Heart of Man.

But

But if this Case is so clear and incontestible, what shall we say to the *next*, where the *whole Course of Nature* seems to be *disturbed* and *interrupted*, and even the *Sun* and *Moon* are *stopt* in their Courses, by the Voice of a *frail* and *mortal* Man? We need be under *no Pain* or *Concern*. God is able to plead his own Cause. Truth will prevail, and his *Word* is *built* on a *Foundation*, that is not to be *shaken* by all the *crafty* and *insidious*, but *vain* and *impotent*, *Arts* and *Devices* of *unreasonable* and *wicked* Men.

## C A S E IV.

*Concerning the Sun and Moon  
standing still at the Command  
of Joshua.*

**W**E have here a Scene of Astonishment indeed. The original authentick Account of it is in the following Words, (*Jos. x. 12, &c.*) *Then spake Joshua unto the Lord, in the Day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the Children of Israel, and he said in the Sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou Moon, in the Valley of Ajalon. And the Sun stood still, and the Moon stayed, until the People had avenged themselves upon their Enemies. Is not this written in the Book of Jasher? So the Sun stood still in the midst of Heaven, and hasted not to go down, about a whole Day. And there was no Day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto*



*unto the Voice of a Man, for the Lord fought for Israel.*

*The surprising Circumstances attending this very extraordinary Case are these :*

1. On the Day of the Discomfiture of the *Amorites*, *Joshua* by his Application to the Lord, obtains a Commission to command the *Sun and Moon* to keep their Station, both which Luminaries obey his Voice.

2. This is not a *silent Miracle* wrought in secret, or done in a Corner, but in broad Day-light ; and solemn Proclamation is made of it, in the Sight of *Israel*, and the whole Camp Witness of the Notoriety of the Fact.

3. So memorable an Event is entered into their publick Records, and the very Name of the Book, and of the Person who made the Entry, preserved and appealed to, as Monuments of the Truths, registered for the Benefit of future Generations. Is it not written in the Book of *Jasher* ?

Jaiher? a Chronicle of *universal Esteem*, and *indisputable Authority*.

4. An Observation upon the Case, that there never was an Instance since the *Creation of the World*, to *that Day*, nor *ever after*, of the *like Prodigy*, or Interposition of Providence, in *this Manner*, to *protect his People*, and *defeat their Enemies*, or of a *truly divine Power thus communicated to a mortal Man*. And then follows a Quotation, taken Word for Word out of this faithful Record *So the Sun stood still*, &c.

This is the true State of the Case. What then has the *Reviler* or *Opposer* of God's Word, to object to the *Credibility* of this *Report*?

1. Heavy Complaint is made of *great Disorder* and *Confusion*, being *thus* introduced amongst the *Works of God*. *The glorious Orbs* of Heaven are *stopt in their Courses*, and *Light* and *Darkness*, which must necessarily be attended with unavoidable

voidable bad Consequences, *unequally distributed* to the Inhabitants of *different Parts* of the Earth ; and all this for the sake of a small and very inconsiderable Nation.

If the *humble* and *pious Believer*, relying upon the Testimony of *a very numerous Host* of Witnesses *present* at this great Sight, and the *Memorial* of it preserved in *faithful authentick Annals*, and never *contradicted* by any *Counter-History*, admits this Objection in its *utmost Strength*, and still insists upon the *Reality* of the Miracle, or its *litteral Accomplishment*, it is impossible he should be *confuted* by all the *Art* and *Sophistry* of Man. For here is no *Effect* mentioned, of which there is not assigned an *adequate Cause*. In respect to God, *nothing is impossible*. With him to *will* is to *act* ; to *notify his Pleasure*, to be obeyed. When he formed the World, he no sooner *spake the Word* than it was *made* ; when he *commanded* it was *created*. There are no *Laws of Nature* but of his *Appointment*,  
and



and subject to be *controuled*, or *reversed* at his Pleasure. Consequently, all *Arguments* and *Objections* are of no Weight, which are levelled against the *Power* of of the *Almighty*. But, if the Day was thus *marvellously* lengthened out, in *one Part* of the World, it is insinuated that *others* must needs suffer through want of the *Light* and *Heat*, and *beneficial Influence* of the *celestial Luminaries* : and in support of this Observation, suggested further, that

2. *No History* in the World, *except the sacred*, has recorded this *memorable Event*, though it be impossible that any Nation could be ignorant of a *Fact*, which must affect *every*, the *most distant Part* of the Globe. And this *universal Silence* is esteemed a strong Presumption of the *Improbability* of the *Scripture Account*.

It would be kind in these Objectors to inform us, what *Memoirs*, and of *what Nation*, they have to *produce* of equal  
Antiquity

*Antiquity and Authority with the History of Joshua.* Not that it would be of any Service to the *Cause of Infidelity*, if they were *able* to do this. For to cut off every *possible Plea* in considering the *next Case*, not unlike to this in its Nature, I shall attempt to shew, that the *Authority of Scripture* may be *vindicated*, even allowing the full *Weight* of their Objection, and that there was *no* such *Interruption* of the *Course* of the *Laws of Nature*, as, at present, is contended for.

P

C A S E

## C A S E V.

*Concerning the Shadow of the  
Sun-Dial of Ahaz, going back  
ten Degrees.*

**T**HAT I may not seem singular in my Sentiments on this *remarkable Case*, I beg Leave to preface what I have to offer, with an *Extract out of the Inauguration Speech of Christopher*, (afterwards *Sir Christopher*) Wren, *Astronomy Professor of Gresham-College*.

— Erunt fortassè qui frontem corrugent, asserente me codicem ipsum sacrum sæpe Astronomo egere interprete. Liceat tamen quærere, quomodo retrocesserit umbra in horologio Ahaz, cum inviolatis naturæ legibus, ex merâ horologii fabricâ, pluribus modis id fieri possit; vel ex projectione quadam horarum non vulgari, vel ex gnomonis figurâ, aut planorum quorundam positione variâ. Verùm cujusmodi fuerit horologium illud, intelligere



gere licet, si modò fides adhibenda sit Hebræo cuidam Scriptori, ex cujus nimis involutâ descriptione, datur tamen con-  
 jicere, ejusdem esse generis, quo Chaldæi fuerint usi, quodque Berosum primum in Græciam intulisse a Vitruvio accepimus, scilicet hemicyclium excavatum ex quadrato, ad enclimaque succisum, ut verbis ipsius Vitruvii utar, qui marmora polire quam paginas doctior sic potius voluit, hemicylindrus concavus excavatus ex cubo succiso ad angulum elevationis poli. Neceffe est ergo in ejusmodi horologio, vel solem, vel umbram verè illis decem gradibus retrocessisse. At quid si Parelium subito apparere dicerem? Parelii sanè in halonum peripheriis semper apparent. Sunt halones majores semidiametrum obtinentes 22 circiter graduum coronæ albicantes, et coloribus languentibus pictæ. Sunt et Halones interiores, 10 aut 11 circiter graduum magis saturis coloribus variegatæ, in quarum circumferentiâ, (tanquam gemma in annulo arte encausticâ picto) lucet parelius. Qui spectro-  
 rum in aere historias colligere velit, me-

eum faciet. Cum ergo absit 10 gradibus a sole parelius, ponamus verum solem nuperimè occidisse; igitur parelius subitò enascens potuit vicariam umbram 10 gradibus horizonte altiore projicere, et pro sole vero retrogresso reputari. Quid autem si eo modo fiat, quo, mense Aprilis, aiunt in Insulâ Sumatrâ, quotannis solem ad satis observabile cœli spatium retrocedere videri? Penes rerum Indicarum Scriptores fides esto. Quod si non ficta referant, necesse est id fieri ex refractione validâ radiorum solarium trans vaporem nitrosum, in nubem angularem efformatum, prysmati christallino similem; talis enim nubes vento lenitèr promota, simul ac solem angulo interiori operuerit, distortis radiis eum resilire cogat, et, donec pertranseat vapor, in alio manere loco necesse est. Sic enim rerum speciem intuentibus, e locis suis amoveant pulchra trigoni vitrei mendacia. Neque sic miraculis parùm piè detraho. Hebræorum enim regi hæc umbræ insolita retrocessio in signum erat: erat et Iris diluvionis patribus signum, quæ, si nunquàm

nunquàm postèa affulsisset, quis Iride,  
verè Thaumantiam, pro miraculo non  
habere?

See *Ward's Lives of Gresham Professors*.

The following Translation of this Ex-  
tract I make for the Benefit of the *English*  
Reader.

— ‘ It is possible I may have the  
‘ Frowns of some for presuming to as-  
‘ sert that even the Bible has frequent  
‘ Occasion for an Astronomer to be its  
‘ Interpreter. However I may be indul-  
‘ ged the Liberty to enquire, how the  
‘ Shadow on the Dial of *Abaz*, (Is. xxviii.  
‘ 8.) went back, since there are diverse  
‘ Ways by which this may be accounted  
‘ for, without any Violation of the Laws  
‘ of Nature. It might be occasioned  
‘ by an uncommon Projection of the Fi-  
‘ gures of the Hours — or the peculiar  
‘ Frame and Shape of the Gnomon or  
‘ Hand of the Dial, — or the dif-  
‘ ferent Position of certain Planes. But  
‘ we are not left altogether in the Dark



' as to the very Form and Figure of this  
 ' Dial, if we may but credit a certain  
 ' *Hebrew* Author, from whose Description  
 ' (though indeed intricate enough in all  
 ' Conscience) there is room to conjecture,  
 ' that it was of the very same Sort which  
 ' the Chaldeans made use of, and which  
 ' Vitruvius informs us was first intro-  
 ' duced by Berofus into *Greece*. He  
 ' calls it *Hemicyclium excavatum ex qua-*  
 ' *drato, ad enclimaque succisum*. These  
 ' are the very Words of Vitruvius, who  
 ' had a better Hand in polishing his Sta-  
 ' tues, than his Books by accurate De-  
 ' scriptions. He seems to have wanted  
 ' to express himself thus. *Hemicylin-*  
 ' *drus concavus excavatus ex cubo succiso*  
 ' *ad angulum elevationis poli.*' Now from  
 a Dial thus constructed, either the Sun  
 or the Shadow must actually have gone  
 back ten degrees.

Before I proceed, an Apology may be  
 necessary for not attempting to translate  
 either of the Descriptions of the pecu-  
 liar

liar *Form* or *Shape* of this Dial. As  
 to the *first*, I freely own, I do not com-  
 prehend its Meaning; and if I am clearer  
 in my Conceptions of the *latter*, I can-  
 not see that it is of any *imaginable use*.  
 To what purpose is it to observe, that  
 a Dial of such a particular Frame would  
 cast its Shade ten Degrees distant from  
 the Place where it ought? What a coarse  
 Compliment is this upon the *Chaldeans*,  
 the supposed Inventors of this *useless*  
 Piece of Machinery? And where is the  
*Wisdom* of the *Greeks*, in receiving such  
 a *misguiding* Form of Mechanism, into  
 their Country? How could it answer  
 the Prophet's Intention to convince *He-*  
*zekiah* of the Truth of his Prediction,  
 by the Offer of a *Miracle*, when he  
 was only directing his Eyes to a Dial  
 which pointed its Shade wrong every  
 Day in the Year, and when the Rea-  
 son of this was known to proceed from  
*natural* and *necessary* Causes? In short,  
 the Dial must be made true, project it's  
 Shade *right*, and this Shade be *miracu-*  
*lously*

*lously retorted*, or else there was no room for *Conviction* in the King, the Prophet having given neither *Sign nor Wonder*, whereby he might believe his Words. Seemingly not satisfied therefore with this Solution, the Astronomy Professor proceeds:

‘ But what if I should say, that here  
 ‘ was an immediate Appearance of a  
 ‘ Parelus, or Mock-Sun in this Case?  
 ‘ These false Suns always present them-  
 ‘ selves in the Circumferences of Halo’s,  
 ‘ or the Extremities of Circles which  
 ‘ surround the Sun. Some of them are  
 ‘ of great Extent, their Semidiameter  
 ‘ about twenty-two Degrees, their Rings  
 ‘ whitish, and painted in feint and lan-  
 ‘ guid Colours. But besides these, there  
 ‘ are also interior Halo’s of about ten  
 ‘ or eleven Degrees, diversified in bolder  
 ‘ Colours, in whose Circumference the  
 ‘ false Sun shines like a Diamond in an  
 ‘ enamelled Ring. He, who will be at  
 ‘ the Pains to make a Collection of this  
 ‘ kind of Appearances in the Atmosphere,  
 ‘ will



' will confirm my Sentiments. Since  
 ' therefore the Parelus we are now con-  
 ' sidering, is ten Degrees distant from  
 ' the Sun, let us suppose the Sun to  
 ' have this Moment set, consequently the  
 ' Parelus appearing at the same Instant  
 ' will project a Shadow, just as the Sun  
 ' would have done in the same Situation,  
 ' ten Degrees above the Horizon, and  
 ' will have the Appearance of the true  
 ' Sun returned back the same Number  
 ' of Degrees, it had gone down.

' But what, if after all, this should  
 ' happen in the same manner as they  
 ' tell you, that in the Island of *Suma-*  
 ' *tra*, in the Month of *April*, there is  
 ' every Year an apparent Retrocession  
 ' of the Sun, through a very consider-  
 ' able Space of Heaven. I leave *Indian*  
 ' Authors to vouch for the Fact. But  
 ' if there be any Truth in their Rela-  
 ' tion, this must proceed from a strong  
 ' Refraction of Sun Beams beyond a Bed  
 ' of Nitre, formed into the Shape of

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' an

' an angular Cloud resembling a chry-  
 ' stal Prism, for such a Cloud gently  
 ' wafted by the Wind, as soon as its in-  
 ' ward Angle shall be directly opposite  
 ' to the Sun, will make its Rays di-  
 ' verge, as if the Sun itself was started  
 ' back out of its Place, and until this  
 ' Body of Vapour passes clear away, it  
 ' must remain in the same Situation.  
 ' Thus do Things appear to Spectators,  
 ' and in this manner do they change  
 ' their Position, by the beautiful Misre-  
 ' presentation of a triangular Glass. Nor  
 ' in this Account do I profanely de-  
 ' tract from the Truth of Miracles ;  
 ' for this unexampled Reversion of the  
 ' Shadow was granted to the *Hebrew*  
 ' King for a Sign, just as the Rainbow  
 ' at the Deluge, was a Sign unto the  
 ' Patriarchs. Now, supposing the Rain-  
 ' bow had never shined out in the Hea-  
 ' vens any more, who would have scrupled  
 ' to pronounce a Sight so prodigiously  
 ' astonishing a real Miracle ?'

What

What *Ingenuity, Truth, or Solidity* there is in these *Conjectures*, I submit to *others* to determine. Only I must make an Exception to the *Propriety* of one Expression, where the *seeming Removal* of Bodies out of their Places, is miscalled *Mendacia*, the *false Report*, no *Misrepresentation* of the Prism. It is no *false Report*, no *Misrepresentation*. The Objects appear in the *very Light and Position*, which view'd by this Instrument they ought to do; and the Reason of their *thus* appearing, is the *necessary Effect* of a Cause as *permanent and invariable*, as *that* which maketh the Rays of Light *always* proceed in a *direct* Line, where there are no *different Strata* of *Vapours* of a *heterogeneous* Kind, to *modify* or *condense* the Air, and cause a *Refraction*.

The Use I would make of the *above Extract*, is, that in the Opinion of this celebrated Philosopher, it was in the



Power of God to *accomplish* all that he promised to the good King, without *disturbing* the *Course of Nature*, or *confounding* the *Motion* of the *great Lights* of *Heaven*, and this, only by giving a *different Turn* or *Direction* to their *Rays*. And so doubtless it was, (whatever becomes of the *assigned Means* of doing this) by *thousands* of ways *inscrutable* by *poor dark-sighted Mortals*. But still if we ourselves can *comprehend* and *explain*, how the thing, in any *possible Method*, is even *conceivable*, what *Childishness*, or rather *Madness* or *Impiety* is it to suggest, that the *Almighty* cannot do by *Nature*, what Man himself can *contrive* and *effect* by *Art*?

The same Observation may be extended to the *Command* of *Joshua*, given to the *Sun and Moon* to *stand still*, without varying their Station. Let the Hand of the Almighty (by whatever *secret invisible Means*) give a *different Direction* to the Rays of Light, and the  
Sun

Sun and Moon may *continue* their *Course*, and yet in the *Sight of all Israel*, seem *fixt* and *immoveable* in the *same Situation*, and the *Miracle* will remain still as *great* and *astonishing*, and answer *all the Purposes* for which it is granted, as much as if these *great Lights* had been *riveted* to any *particular Point* of Heaven, without the least *Change* of Position. Nor was this any *Imposition* upon the *Senses* of the *Israelites*, since, (notwithstanding their *progressive Motion*) they appeared in the *very Place* they *necessarily must*, and *ought* to do, by the *uniform* and *invariable Laws* of *Refraction*. If the *Israelites* esteemed this a *real Miracle*, they judged *rightly* and *truly*; for such a *Distortion* of the Rays of Light, (which, unless impeded by foreign Obstructions always proceed in *parallel direct Lines*) could only be occasioned by a *divine Influence*. But if from hence they gathered, that these *Bodies* were *deprived of all Motion*, and *never changed their Station*, the Conclusion

sion was *overhasty* and *precipitate*. But still here was no *Misinformation* of the Senses; no *Error* of *Sight*, but of *Judgment*; their *Eyes* did not fail or deceive them, but truly and faithfully exhibited these *luminous Objects*, (their Rays being thus refracted by the Power of God) in the very Place, where they ought to appear.

Hence then it undeniably follows, that the Argument drawn from the *Silence* of the Histories of other Nations, concerning this great Event, is manifestly of no *Weight*, because the Miracle was *local*, and could not be *observed in*, as it did not *extend to*, *foreign Countries*. If any thing further seems necessary in *Illustration* of this Point, I refer the Reader to what he will find, in the Case of our blessed Lord's *unexpected Appearance* in the midst of his Disciples, in a Room where the Doors were shut.

CASE



## C A S E VI.

*Concerning our Blessed Saviour  
walking upon the Sea.*

**T**HE *Objections* to the *Miracles* of the *New Testament*, which remain to be considered, are but *few*, and the *Answers* need not be *tedious*. These indeed, instead of having the Force of *solid Arguments*, strenuously urged by *zealous* and *able Champions* for the Truth, seem rather the *Velleities*, the *faint Wishes*, or *dying Struggles*, of *feeble Combatants*, in Defence of a *sinking Cause*.

The Case of our Blessed Lord *walking upon the Sea*, is related by St. Mark, (Ch. vi. 47, &c.) in the following Words. *And when Even was come, the Ship was in the midst of the Sea, or the Lake of Gennefaret, and he alone on the Land. And he saw them toiling and rowing, for the Wind was contrary unto them ; and about the fourth Watch of the Night, after*  
three

three o'Clock in the Morning, *he cometh unto them, walking upon the Sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw him walking upon the Sea, they supposed it had been a Spirit, and cried out, (for they all saw him, and were troubled) and immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid. And he went up unto them, into the Ship, and the Wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the Miracle of the Loaves, for their Heart was hardened. Nearly the very same Account is given by two other Evangelists, to which St. John adds the Prosperity of their Voyage, and the Quickness of their Passage, and St. Matthew, the Attempt of Peter to walk upon the Sea, and the Effect this Miracle had upon the Passengers, from whom it extorted the Confession, attended with Prostration and Worship, Of a Truth thou art the Son of God. Now what is there forced and unnatural in this Relation? Human Nature is so truly*

truly pictured out in its *Infirmities* and *Failings* ; the Conception of the Disciples are represented, so agreeable to the *Appearance* of *Angels* in human Form, not unfrequently mentioned in the History of their Nation ; their *Fears and Apprehensions* on the Occasion, confirmed by the *Obscurity* of the Light, and the *Speed* of their Master, exceeding that of the *Motion* of a Ship, are so exceeding *strong* and *natural* ; the *Censure* of their own *Conduct*, and *Hardness of Heart*, in not paying due Attention to a *Miracle* just wrought before their Eyes, and the *Praise* bestowed upon *others*, who with *greater Faith*, and *sounder Judgment*, glorified the Son of God, are all Particulars, in each of which, if we cannot discern most *strong* and *convincing Marks* of *Truth* and *Fidelity* in the *Reporters* of these Facts, no History in the World can have any *internal Characters* of *Sincerity*, *Fairness*, and *Impartiality* impressed upon it. What then is it which the *Wisdom* of Unbelievers has to object to the *Credibility*



*bility of a Miracle so strongly attested,*  
*and so clearly and circumstantially related?*  
 Nothing further than that this must be  
 an *idle Farce*, or *Scene of Delusion*, be-  
 cause it is not to be *reconciled* with the  
*known Properties* of a *human Body*. Man  
 cannot *walk*, or even *stand*, upon the  
 Surface of a *calm* and *unruffled*, how  
 much less on *that* of a *tempestuous* and  
*raging Ocean*. True, no *mere Man*, it  
 is confessed, can *do this*; but, supported  
 by a *divine Power*, any Man undoubtedly  
 may. This *Peter* actually *did*, and when  
 the *Boisterousness* of the Waves terrified  
 him to that Degree, as to get the better  
 of his *Judgment* and *Understanding*, he  
 is *upbraided* by his great Master (though  
 his *beginning to sink* might seem in some  
 measure to excuse his *Want* of Courage  
 and Resolution) for the *Weakness* of his  
*Faith*. To pretend then that He, *to*  
*whom all Power in Heaven and Earth is*  
*given*, and who gave the clearest De-  
 monstration every Day of its *stupendous*  
*Extent* had yet *not Power* to make his  
 own

own Body *specifically lighter* than the Column of Water which supported it, or by thousands of *secret invisible* Expedients, to walk upon the Face of the Deep with Safety, is so very weak and trifling, that a serious Answer would look like *Impertinence* and *Folly*, by seeming to admit something of *Weight* in the Objection. The Disciples and their Companions in the Ship, had *ocular Demonstration* of the *Absurdity* and *Falshood* of this Opinion. They believed *their own Eyes*, their Senses did *not fail* them, and the *Judgment* formed on the Case, will in *all Ages*, to the End of the World, continue *sound* and *unanswerable*, Truly *this was the Son of God*.

## C A S E VII.

*Concerning Mary Magdalene mistaking our Blessed Lord for the Gardener.*

**T**HIS may be dismissed in three Words. This truly *pious* and *devout Convert*, who (*John xx.*) could not rest in her Bed, but at Break of Day repaired to the Garden, where her *dearest Lord* was *buried*, finding the *Stone* rolled away from the *Sepulchre*, with *all Speed* apprises *Peter* and *John* that the *Tomb* is open, and their Master's Body conveyed away. They, in all haste, run and inform themselves of the *Truth* of her Report. They see, and believe, and return. Nothing more is added, for it is observed, that *as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that he must rise from the Dead*. But *Mary*, to indulge her Grief, continues on the *sad melancholy Spot*, where she is comforted, first with a *Vision of Angels*,  
and



and the joyful News of her Lord's Resurrection, and afterwards honoured with the first Visit from himself in Person. She indeed, at first, *mistook* him for the Gardener, her Eyes being *swollen with Tears*, and Heart too full of Grief, and other *tumultuous Passions*, to gaze with *Attention*, upon *outward and common Objects*. Not to mention, how *probable* it is, that he himself, by an Alteration of his *Speech*, or *Habit*, or *Gesture*, might help to *promote* the *Error*, that her Joy might be the *greater* on the *unexpected Discovery*. But no sooner does he call her in his *usual, familiar Manner*, by her Name *Mary*, than the *well known Voice and Accent*, opens her *Eyes*, and *fixes* her *Attention*; his *Countenance and Person*, his *every Look and Motion*, convinces her it is *the Lord himself*, and in a *Transport of Joy*, she seems hardly restrained from flying into his Arms, and *embracing him*, only is checked by a Representation of the *Unseasonableness* of *wasting* the present *precious Hour* in *useless Fondness*, and the *Assurance* given  
her

her that he is not yet taking his *Leave* of this *lower World*, but has a longer Space of Time allotted for his *Continuance* here upon Earth. Now from a *natural* and *easy Mistake* about the *Gardener*, made by a Person under *great Perturbation* of *Mind*, and which in a *Moment* was *removed*, and then *all* her *Senses* combined to *testify* the *Truth* of what she related, and *Hundreds* of *Witnesses* confirmed it by *attesting* the *same thing*, that the *Lord* was *risen* indeed, to raise an *Argument* against the *Credibility* of the *Information* of our *Senses*, shews such a *strong Propensity* to *cavil* and *find fault*, or rather such a *determined Resolution*, at all *Events*, and without any *Appearance* of *Truth*, or *Reason*, to reject the *Scripture-Account* of *Miracles*, that it is even a *Pain* to *dwell* on such *frivolous Exceptions*. I confess I am *weary* of doing it, and with *Pleasure* see what remains to be considered, *contracting* it-  
self into a *narrow Compass*.

## C A S E - VIII.

*Concerning our Lord's Appearance, and Conversation with two of his Disciples on their Way to Emmaus.*

**I** Find these Papers swell upon my Hands, so much beyond my imagination, that, in considering the present Case, I presume I shall have the Reader's Thanks, if, instead of transcribing the whole Account of St. Luke (Ch. xxiv.) I only select and point out the material Circumstances. On the same Day that our Lord rose again from the Dead, he joined himself to two of his Disciples on the Road to a small Village called Emmaus, and observing their Countenance to be sad, and a deep Melancholy to hang about them, he enquires, like a perfect Stranger, concerning the News at Jerusalem. But it is observed, their Eyes were holden, that they should not know him. After some

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Conference with him, and a *faithful Recital* of *all* that came to *their Knowledge* with the *strictest Regard to Truth*, and without adding one Word more, the *Obstruction* of their *Sight* is, at length, *removed*, their *Eyes are opened*, and they *see plainly*, that the Person they are conversing with is *Christ himself*. Now this, it seems, is an Instance of the *Uncertainty* of the *Reports of our Senses*, since, in some Cases, Men may not know their most *intimate Friends* and *Companions*, but the *same Object* may appear *the same*, or quite different to the *same Persons* viewing it, on any *Disorder of Sight*, occasioned by Means either *inward* or *outward*. And so it inevitably may and *must*, without affecting the *Argument*, which *contends* for the *Truth* of their *Information*, and which always *supposes* them in their *right* and *natural*, and *perfect State*. No one can be so absurd as to imagine, that that God, who *made* the *Eye*, cannot *suspend* or *destroy*, or restore the *Use* of it, in *part*, or in *whole*. There is mention (*Mark xviii. 22.*) of a  
 very

very remarkable Cure performed by our Blessed Saviour upon a *blind Man* of *Bethsaida*. Jesus takes him by the Hand, leads him out of the Town, into the publick Fields, probably that *Multitudes* may be *Witnesses* of the *Truth* of the *Miracle*, and to convince them that the Cure is wrought by *no natural Means*, he makes use of an *Eye-Salve*, more likely to *put out the Eyes* of one who saw clearly, than restore Sight to those which were *distempered*, or *lost*. He spit on his *Eyes*, and put his *Hand* upon them, and then asked him, if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, *I see Men as Trees, walking*. This Answer (*wild and extravagant as it may seem*) appears to me an *internal Mark*, not to be overlooked, of the *Credibility* of the *Gospel History*. It is so *natural*, and like what might come out of the Mouth of one *born blind*, or who had lost *all Traces* and *Remembrances of Sight*, that I don't see, how one of a *different kind* could be expected. A Person perpetually and totally deprived of the Use of any Sense, can

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form

form no *Judgment* or *Idea* of the *Objects* belonging to *that* Sense. If a Man *always* deaf, should take it into his Head, that the *Report* of a *Cannon* was like the *Smell* of a *Violet*, this would not seem more *romantick* or *surprising*, than what I think Mr. *Lock* relates of a *blind Man*, who fancied the *Colour* of *Scarlet* resembled the *Sound* of a *Trumpet*. The *blind Man* of *Bethsaida* could have no Ideas of *Light* or *Colours*, and therefore, notwithstanding his *Sight* was restored, 'till *Use* and *Experience* had taught him, he could not distinguish betwixt *outward Objects*. He seems, in his *State of Blindness*, to have formed a *Notion*, that *Man*, was a poor, *small*, *diminutive* Creature, and when his *Eyes* are opened, is quite *astonished* to see him of so *gigantick* a *Stature*. The *Company* which he surveys, appear in his *Sight* like a *Grove* of *stately Trees*, stalking *majestically* before him. But when, on a *Comparison* of their *Voices*, *Features*, and *Habits*, &c. he discovers them to be *Men*, the *Sight* of his *Understanding* as well as of his *Eyes* is



is restored, his future Discourse would be more *consistent* and *rational*, and convince all present of the *Perfection* of his *Cure*, and that he *saw every Man* distinctly and *clearly*. Now it would not be more *irrational* to *infer* that this Man's Sight was still *obscure* and *imperfect*, because it seemed to *contradict* the *Wildness* of his former Answer, than to *conclude* that the *Eyes* of the Disciples *near Emmaus*, were *defective* and *failed* them, after God had restored that *Fulness* and *Perspicuity* of *Sight*, which for a little Time, he had *withheld*. The Truth is, the *blind Man* of *Bethsaida*, was *perfectly* cured, and all the *Inhabitants present Witnesses* that he *was so*. And the Disciples, who after their *Obstruction* of Sight was *removed*, testified that the Person they *had conversed with*, was *Jesus himself*, had *abundant Proof* of the *Perfection* of their *Senses*, and the *Truth* of their *Evidence* by the concurrent Testimony of every *individual Person* who *saw* the Lord after he was risen from the Dead.

## C A S E IX.

*Concerning Cbrist's appearing in  
the midst of his Disciples when  
the Doors were shut.*

**T**HIS is related both by St. *Luke* (Ch. xxiv.) and St. *John* (Ch. xx.) The former mentions the Circumstance of the *Disciples Fear* and *Consternation*. They were *terrified and affrighted*, and *supposed that they had seen a Spirit*. The latter assigns the *Reason* of their *Care* and *Caution in shutting the Doors*, and assembling thus *privately*, which was *Their Fear of the Jews*.—The *Infidels Observation* upon the Case is *this*, Truth will out, and the *Evangelists* begin now to speak like *wise and judicious Free-thinkers*. Here is a *fair and honest Confession*; grant but which, and we will undertake to *demonstrate*, that the *whole Fabrick of Christianity* is a *chimerical Structure, a Castle in the Air*, without  
any

any *firm* or *solid Foundation*. Only consider, the *Point* to be *proved* is the *Resurrection of Jesus*. And how is this proved? By his *presenting* himself to his *Disciples* in a human Shape. But pray observe, the *Body* with which he is *cloathed*, is scarce the *Phantom* or *Shadow* of a *real material Substance*, but can *appear*, or *vanish* out of Sight, at pleasure, and is not to be *excluded* or *imprisoned* by *Locks* or *Bolts*, or *Bars*, or *Doors*, or *Walls*; was this then a *true Body*? Is Christ *actually risen* from the Dead? This is the Objection in its full Strength.

*The Answer* from what has been already observed, concerning the *Refraction of Rays of Light*, will be *obvious* and *easy*. If I can charge my Memory with what I have read in a Book which I have not seen these forty Years, Sir *Isaac Newton* in his *Opticks*, in order to prove that *Rays of Light* are not *reflected* by *Impaction* on the *solid Parts* of Bodies, made use of the following *Experiment*. He  
placed



placed a *Prism* in such a manner, that *all the Rays of Light*, from the most glowing, to the *fantest Colours*, were *reflected*, according to their *settled Laws* in their *natural State and Order*. Then, *without the least Change of its Position*, he clapped a *Second Prism*, on the *Back* of the former, the Consequence of which was, that the *Rays*, which before were *reflected*, were now *all refracted and transmitted* through *both Prisms*. Now this was not only a *clear Proof* of the *Truth* of the *Proposition*, for which the Experiment was made, but also of the *Capacity* of the *Rays of Light* *diverging*, or being *variously reflected*, or *refracted*, by the *Art of Man*. No Object can be *seen*, but by the *Rays of Light* *reflected* from it. Let but *these Rays* be *retorted*, or *totally absorbed*, so as not to reach the *Eye* of the *Spectator*; and the *Object*, in *broad Day-light* becomes as much *invisible*, as if covered with the *thickest Darkness*. Allow the *Truth* of this *Observation*, and whilst a *divine Power* interposed, and the *Rays of Light* were in so  
*distorted*

*distorted* a State, that none of them were *reflected* from Christ's Body upon the *Disciples Eyes*, it was *impossible* they should *see* him, though he *went* into the Room *along* with them, and was then *standing* in the *midst* of them. Again, *restore* these Rays to their *true Direction*, that they fall in their *natural State* upon the *Eyes* of his Disciples, and he must, at that very Instant, like an *Apparition*, seem to *start* up amongst them. The *Appearance* or *Vanishing* of a human Body out of Sight, may then be accounted for by *natural Means*, upon the *clearest Maxims* of true Philosophy, without any essential Change of its Qualities. This we, ourselves, can comprehend. Is then a God, who has *no Bounds* to his *Power* or *Wisdom*, not able to do what we can *conceive*? Undoubtedly he is, by *thousands* of *Ways*, unknown to Man. No Argument can *prejudice* the Cause of *revealed Religion*, which equally strikes at *that* of *natural*, and impiously calls in question the *Power* of the *Almighty*.

*mighty.* But to do this, when the *Glories* of this *visible World*, the most *stupendous Works* of God, stand naked before us, what is it but to contend for *Darkness* in the Face of the *Sun*, to plead for *Falseness*, in the Presence of *Truth*, and to trust in *Lyes*, when *Demonstration* stares us in the Face, with a *Mirror* in her Hand to *confound*, and put us out of Countenance at the *Sight* of our *Blindness* and *Folly*?

Now if the *Miracles*, recorded in Scripture, are so *undeniably true* and *certain*, that they cannot be *confuted*, or even called *into question*, without *Folly*, without *Impiety*, without *Blasphemy*; the Time *when* they were wrought, the Place *where*, and the End *for which*, with all their Variety of Circumstances, are *capable* of being *ascertained*, and *attested*, and *eminently good* Men are abundantly qualified to be *competent* and *faithful Witnesses* of the *Truth* of them. *Miraculous Facts* come under the *Cognisance* of our *Senses*, as much as those which are not so. A *dead Man* restored to Life, is as much an *Object of Sight*



as one who has never *suffered Death*, or lain in his Grave. And if it appears from the *whole Tenour* of Mens Lives and Conversations, that they are *just* and *upright*, *holy* and *exemplary*, and *faithful* even unto *Death*, foregoing all their worldly Interests, and ready to seal their *Doctrine* with *their Blood*: If at the same Time they appear to be the *Delegates of Heaven*, acting with a *divine Power and Commission*, evidently approved as such by God himself, by the *Signs and Wonders*, which he enables them to do: If the *Testimony* of such Men as these, is *not to be received*, in regard to *Miracles* *seen with their own Eyes*, they who are so exceeding *slow of Belief*, must at least give *Credit* to one *Miracle* greater and more amazing than *all those* they have *Hardiness* to deny, which is, — that Men may cease to be Men, — that *Contempt*, and *Ignominy*, and *Shame*, and *Travail*, and *Pain*, and *Hunger*, and *Thirst*, and *Nakedness*, and *Bonds*, and *Imprisonment*, and *Racks*, and *Torture*, and *Death* voluntarily submitted to, (all

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which

which was the Fate of the blessed Apostles) may become *grateful* to *Flesh and Blood*, ——— nay, that these things are more eligible to *Cheats* and *Imposters*, (for such these holy *Confessors* and *Martyrs* are deemed by Unbelievers to be) than *Liberty*, and *Rest*, and *Ease*, and *Joy*, and *Peace*, sweetned with the *Comforts* of a *good Conscience*, and the *blessed Hope* of *Life* and *everlasting Salvation*.

The CONCLUSION from the whole is *this*. *Revealed Religion*, is not that *shadowy, unsubstantial* thing which the *Weak* and *Wicked* represent ; but a *Building of God*, founded upon a *Rock*, *strong* and *enduring*, *solid* and *immoveable*. The *Evidence* of *Sense* is not *precarious* and *uncertain*, nor the *Testimony* of *Man* *weak* and *fallible*, but *duly circumstanced*, *faithful*, and *weighty*, and *worthy of all Acceptation*. An *infallible Apostle* has taught us, (*Acts* xvii. 30.) that *God*, who winked at the *Ignorance* of former *Ages*, does now *command all Men*, every where to *repent*,  
in

in that he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he has given us full Assurance, *πῶς*, strong and rational Grounds of Belief, in that he hath raised him from the Dead. But how is a thing, which is not yet, to be proved by what now is? How can what is invisible be made manifest by what is seen? Or the Resurrection of Christ be a Demonstration of a Judgment to come? Let me try, if I cannot set this Argument in its full and clear Light. When our Lord return'd from his Grave, and shew'd himself alive again, the Disciples who saw, and heard, and touched, and handled, and familiarly conversed with him, had as strong and convincing Proof that he was risen from the Dead, as they had of the Truth of their own Being. They could not be more sure and certain, that they themselves did then see, and hear, and breathe, and think. Evidence stronger than this, the Heart of Man cannot wish for, or desire; nor indeed is it



conceivable, how it is even in the Power of God *himself* to give. Now the *Resurrection of Christ* was an *Event*, which he had *oftentimes foretold*, and which, when come to pass, *must prove* him a *Prophet*, *mighty both in Word and in Deed*. But a *true Prophet* cannot prophecy *falsely*, or foretel *things to come*, which *shall never be*. If then Christ proved himself a *true Prophet*, by his *rising again from the Dead*, his *Resurrection* is a *certain Proof* of what he also foretold concerning a *future Judgment*, or else he is *not a true Prophet*, but a *false one*. And if the *Proof* of his being a *true Prophet*, is *infallibly clear and certain*, (as there can be *no Proof* of what is *false*) the *Doctrine* of a *Judgment to come*, proved by it, must *necessarily* be of *equal clearness and certainty*. In other Words, if *Christ be risen from the Dead*, and acknowledged a *true Prophet* of the most *High God*, his Words *must be fulfilled*, and  
 he

he will judge the *World in Righteousness*. If he be not risen, our *Faith in him* is a most *vain* thing indeed.

Hence then it appears that the *Rewards and Punishments of another World*, are not the *Reveries of giddy Enthusiasts*, or the *brain-sick Dreams of weak and superstitious Men*, but *weighty Truths of God*, convey'd down to us by *infallible Testimony*, and confirmed by *undeniable Proof*, and *irresistable Demonstration*. He that bath Ears to hear, let him hear.

With so great *Reason, Weight, and Authority*, did the Blessed Apostle St. Paul, most affectionately exhort his *faithful Converts at Corinth*.

Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye *stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, forasmuch as ye (do not vainly Con-  
jecture,

jecture, or weakly surmise, or feintly  
hope and trust, but assuredly, demon-  
strably, infallibly) *know that your La-  
bour is not in vain in the Lord.*

F I N I S  
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